



Ghadar Jari Hai

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India's Tryst with Destiny!



When?

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Important note from the publisher:

An endeavour like this can only run with generous contributions from readers and well wishers. All writers, artists, graphics and layout staff are contributing their products and services freely and voluntarily. However to barely recover the cost of printing and postage we have been forced to revise the contribution per issue. Many readers, who are aware of the likely financial burden of such a magazine, have suggested that we come up with a life time contribution scheme for patrons. Accordingly with this issue we have introduced such a scheme. The details are given below.

We are confident our readers and well wishers will help us make this effort a success.

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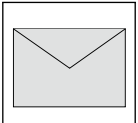
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Editorial

A Good Beginning

We are extremely happy to place the second issue of *Ghadar Jari Hai* in your hands. The idea behind the magazine has been received with overwhelming warmth and sympathy by large numbers of people in India and abroad, by activists in the people's movement and scholars. Several people have come forward to join this ghadari caravan as editorial advisors and we heartily thank them for that. Some have offered us advice and articles. Some have ordered multiple copies and have even taken the responsibility of distributing it in their regions and collecting monetary contributions to keep it going. A few young college-going friends in Mumbai have written to us that they have been selling the magazine in hundreds in colleges and in various political meetings in Mumbai! What more can an editorial team ask for? All power to them! Similar feedback has come from a few other places.

In the interim, more people have thrown their hat in the ring as editorial advisors. We heartily welcome Dr B P Agrawal, Dr Raj Misra, Rajeew Lochan Sah, Prof Shekhar Pathak, Dr Arif Ali Syed, Dr Pyara Singh and Iqbal Singh to the family. We look forward to them enriching the magazine.

It is appropriate that we question the assertions made by representatives of the government in the context of the 60th anniversary of our Independence that the aims of 1857 were achieved in 1947 or in 2007. Prakash Rao discusses the issue in the cover story.

Kamala Sankaran has written on how gradually and systematically the British transplanted a Westminster style political system in India and how the elite were co-opted into it. Naresh Kumar has addressed himself to the question 'what kind of education system existed in pre-British India'. Malem has written about 'Nu pilan' - an anti-colonial struggle led by the women of Manipur, which holds a special place in the hearts of Manipuri people.

We have chatted with Amaresh Misra, in 'Peepul ke Neeche'. He has researched extensively the Ghadar of 1857, about which he is writing a new book, "War of

Civilisations: 1857 AD". Prof K Raghavendra Rao has written about problems in historiography, taking two specific examples that have created a lively controversy in Karnataka.

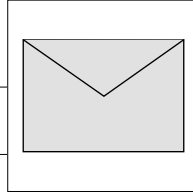
Shivanand Kanavi has reviewed an old book, in fact a century old one, by Vinayak Savarkar on 1857. Savarkar's incandescent story telling still arouses people. Then we have a brief round up of various happenings around the country regarding 1857.

Raghavan has come up with two poignant vignettes of the unfulfilled thirst for freedom in a short story. Renowned artist Panju Ganguli has enriched the issue with his cartoons.

Our editorial 'Call of the Times' in the last issue had put forward the case for such a magazine and the policy we are going to follow in it. However, at the request of some of our readers and contributors, we once again present the same to you.

Ghadar Jari Hai is dedicated to being a platform for discussing Indian solutions to problems facing India. At the same time it is not another generally progressive magazine. It is focused on Indian history, philosophy, economy and politics without the jaundiced eye of Eurocentrism. All serious views, of whatever hue, are welcome as long as the author backs up his or her argument and does not indulge in labeling, name calling and ridicule. We are particularly interested in unraveling pre-British India and the changes brought out through British rule that forms our colonial legacy, since they bear a lot of significance to present developments. We believe that no shade of opinion has a monopoly over truth and that if we all collaborate in this endeavour, we are quite capable of arriving at insights and solutions to our problems, much as our ancestors did. We want to publish well researched articles in various fields, which at the same time are communicative and do not indulge in excessive technical jargon.

With this brief statement of 'editorial policy' we present the second issue to you and look forward to your contributions and comments. ■



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Reading you on our past and future in Ghadar Jari Hai, I was happy that there is someone at least who thinks in these days of thoughtless changes that it is necessary to pause and reflect. Renewal of a people of an ancient nation like ours lies neither in rejecting the past, nor in reviving the past, nor in entirely manipulating our future as we desire it in our immediate greed. T S Eliot has these lines in support of the need I speak of:

'Time present and Time past

Are perhaps present in Time future

And Time future contained in Time past'.

These lines also conclude on a philosophical sense of resignation and acceptance of human predicament in Time.

'If all Time is eternally present

Then all Time is unredeemable'

The last line is profoundly Indian in spirit and not European- a civilization that seems to believe that the earth is a cornucopia and therefore eternal material progress is possible.

Our journey which was renewed in 1857 for self rule has received a good description in the journal.

Warmly

U.R. Ananthamurthy

Bangalore

Dear Editor,

More the things change, more they remain the same. One hundred and fifty years do not seem to have made any qualitative change to the living and working conditions of the vast majority of our people. The reasons for people's dissatisfaction and anger and the systems that led to this are not materially different, either in 1857 or in 2007. The remedy that Bahadur Shah Zafar enunciated in 1857 is valid fully in 2007 too!

Volume 1, Number 1 of Ghadar Jari Hai brings out all these aspects of our contemporary and earlier history. Our humble appreciation of the dedicated efforts put in by a very large number of men and women. That this dedicated effort by an ever-widening circle of men and women is called for to keep this momentum going to bring out further issues makes the task both satisfying and challenging. We shall not; we cannot fail in this effort.

One thought. The happenings that took place in "1857," mostly in the Gangetic plain and surrounding areas had their earlier forebodings all over the country and more particularly in South India. Apart from the patriotic wars fought against the British by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, there were other household names like Kattabomman, Velu Nachiyar, Marudu Brothers, Dheeran Chinnamalai, Kerala Varma and Rani Kittoor Chennamma, and incidents like the Vellore Sepoy Mutiny, whose bravery and achievements do not seem to have reached the ears of most common men and women in North India. This is a serious omission and must be remedied through the pages of Ghadar Jari Hai. The fiery speech made by Chinna Marudu at Trichinopoly seems to anticipate Bahadur Shah Zafar's Firman sixty years later, for its patriotic single-minded appeal to throw the English out of our country!

Yours etc

*Mr and Mrs T S Sankaran
Chennai*

Dear Editor,

Ghadar Heritage Committee, Toronto, wholeheartedly welcomes the publication of the magazine Ghadar Jari Hai. As you have correctly pointed out in the cover story of the inaugural issue, the aims of the Great Ghadar of 1857 were not fulfilled in 1947 or even in 2007 and that is why ghadar continues. It is with similar sentiment that Ghadar Party came into being in US and Canada in 1913. The revolutionaries of Ghadar Party did enormous service to the cause of India's liberation through international propaganda against British colonialism and material assistance to India's liberation struggle. They also tried to organize an uprising in India in 1915, attempting to organize mutinies in the British Indian Army, simultaneously, in a fashion similar to 1857. Though this uprising was suppressed due to its discovery by British intelligence, it fired the imagination of many revolutionary youth like Kartar Singh Sarabha and Bhagat Singh.

Today the Canadian state and the Indian state say that conditions have changed and youth of Indian origin in Canada should integrate with multiculturalism of Canadian state. However it has been our experience that Canadian state is racist and at the same time is

Letters to the Editor

spreading illusions among the youth that they should look after themselves and not worry about society and grab every opportunity in this "land of opportunities." Ghadar Heritage Committee is organizing socials, cultural and sporting events and political discussion among the Indian community in Canada so that the rich democratic and revolutionary heritage of Indian people's struggle is kept alive among our youth. It also builds unity between the Indian community and all other oppressed and immigrant communities in Canada.

Ghadar Heritage Committee will certainly popularize and distribute this magazine in Canada and contribute to the discussion that is being generated in the magazine about India's heritage and problems of today, which have their origin in Euro-centrism and the colonial legacy.

Greetings
Gurdev Singh
Ghadar Heritage Committee
Toronto

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you for the marvellous production of the very first number of Ghadar Jari Hai, dated May 15, 2007. This is a momentous occasion in publishing, coming in the 150th year of the anniversary of the great Ghadar of 1857, and also in the 60th anniversary of the transfer of power from the British into the hands of the ruling elites of India. Despite the fact that the forces that rule India today are closely tied to those that colluded with the British in the defeat of the peoples of India in 1857, the same ruling circles have been unable to ignore the anniversary and continue to be haunted by the ghosts of that shameful past. What came into being after the defeat of 1857 was the direct rule of the British as declared in Victoria's Proclamation of 1858, where she simply states that by dint of being the 'Defender of Faith' and by 'Grace of God' she is to take over the government of India, in contradistinction to the vision of Bahadur Shah Zafar who presented the thesis that it should be the people of India who should decide what kind of system they would have. The rule of Victoria, it must be recognized, came into being to defend a very specific economic and political system that serves the former at a specific time. The present day rulers of India are acutely aware that the Parliamentary Democracy that was established in India in 1947 is a continuation

of, firstly and most importantly the economic system instituted by the British, and secondly the political system instituted by the British which has been suitably modified. The latter is one where the supreme power in India today rests in the Cabinet of Ministers and the Prime Minister, and is a version of the 'Divine Right to Rule' of European kings and queens, and strips the people of India from any kind of participation in their self-governance. The economic system prevailing in India is one which merely serves the interests of the big money bags in the country, when the power passed into their hands from the British money bags, and when the camps made suitable compromises to render powerless the Indian masses in 1947.

By reprinting Victoria's Proclamation, several of Bahadur Shah's Firmans, and Hardial Bains' article on 'The Last Reform: Breaking with the Past', you have brought to the forefront these burning issues facing the Indian polity. The Indian rulers, on the other hand, while failing to resolve the unresolved questions of the polity, seek to project India today as an emergent imperialist power, as a country that would be developed by the year 2020, and as a country whose success is to be gauged through that of its booming industrial class presided over by the houses of Tata, Birla, Reliance, etc., while its masses remain impoverished, unfed, unhoused, uneducated and with a standard of living way below anything that could be deemed fit for human beings.

In this scenario, the battle is also taken into the field of media and imagery, print and electronic, where rosy visions of India as such a power are projected, where day in and day out paens are trotted out on the greatness of 'Indian democracy', 'values', 'individual liberty', all of which are for the ruling elites, while the grim reality is that the trampling with brute force of anyone who might oppose this vision. GJH has appeared on the scene at this important moment in history, where through its work it will advance a different vision of India: an India where the peoples of India will play role in determining their destiny, where the peoples constituting the different nations that constitute India will be able to articulate their aspirations for a voluntary and equal union of nations, where the women of India would be able to break free of their bonds of chattel slavery, where the youth of India would be able to breathe the fresh air of freedom to choose a future of their liking.

Letters to the Editor

I look forward eagerly to elaboration of such burning themes on diverse

subjects such as political economy, political philosophy and history in the pages of GJH in the coming months and years. Without such an elaboration, Indian society cannot get out of the impasse in which it finds itself.

Sincerely,
Prof B Ananthanarayan,
Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore

Dear Editor,

I have received the first issue and liked it. It is refreshing in a rugged sort of way without the usual petty bourgeois frills.

I welcome the appearance of the new journal, Ghadar Jari Hai, an imaginative and creative enterprise, initiated by a group of committed friends in the Capital. It fulfils a badly needed front steering between the severely and narrowly specialised academic journals and middle-brow popular journals, mostly obsessed with a politics in a superficial sense, while offering a courtesy nod to cultural and intellectual matters. This crucial contribution, I anticipate, will lie in its ability to fuse intellectual concerns with the problems facing the lives of our ordinary citizens.

Greetings
K Raghavendra Rao
Dharwad

Dear Editor,

I would like to extend hearty congratulations to you and your associates for taking the historic initiative of launching "Ghadar Jari Hai". You have provided your readers with an intellectual feast, in the form of the Cover Story and features such as "Peepul Ke Neeche", "Study" and "Reflections".

Given the miserable conditions of our people today, everyone would agree that India in 2007 is crying out for an all-round renewal. To grapple with this problem it is absolutely essential to know our history without the bias of Eurocentrism. I do not claim that everything was perfect in our past and that we have to go back to some mythical golden age. However we do inherit a rich body of thought material from our past. We have to look at it from the vantage

point of the needs of the present – preserve or renew what can help us and get over whatever is acting as a road block. At the same time we have to look at other cultures and incorporate what is progressive and in tune with our needs.

In this I believe that your magazine will play an important role. Thank you once again. I will try to help your venture in whatever way I can.

Yours sincerely,
Sangeeta Joshi.
Mumbai

Dear Editor,

After reading the first issue of "Ghadar Jari Hai", members of our Lok Raj Sangathan Committee felt so inspired that we decided to try and promote it in whatever way we could. We have decided that studying its articles and disseminating it would become a permanent item on our agenda. The response we have got is tremendous. We have taken it to various meetings as well as to a number of educational institutes. Various people have expressed their appreciation for this venture due to the following reasons:

1. There is widespread ignorance about our past.
2. There is a tendency today to label people – "Marxists", "Hindutvawadi", "Ambedkarite", and so on.
3. There is a need to re-establish our collective identity. The British not only committed genocide, but they also committed cultural genocide, destroying the self-confidence, self-belief and morale of our people. On the other hand, our rulers today try to promote a chauvinist, jingoistic identity, which is definitely harmful.

Your magazine is seen as a forum that can answer these needs of our people. I would venture to suggest the following: You should start a subscription – many people had wanted to become subscribers after seeing the first issue. You should also start to raise donations and encourage your well-wishers to do the same. We would not want this venture to die out due to paucity of funds.

I wish you every success in this extremely important and timely venture.

Yours sincerely
Dr Sanjeevani Jain
Mumbai

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am grateful to you for sending me copies of Ghadar Jari Hai. I would like to subscribe to the journal. If the original articles are in Hindi I would like to subscribe to it. If however the original articles are in English, I would prefer to have the English version.

As I would like to get associated with your abhiyan, let me introduce myself. Of late I am editing a series of books on History of Science and Technology (HST).

I worked at TIFR and PRL mostly doing radio carbon dating and its applications. I have now settled down at Almora, my home town, after retiring from PRL. Here I am also working on non-literate knowledge systems and also some socio- economic projects.

During our work on the HST project we realized that we had to do a tight rope walking avoiding the Eurocentric distortions of our HST legacy and the exaggerated chauvinistic claims from the saffron brigade. I would like to contribute short essays on them.

Prof. D.P. Agrawal
PhD, FNASc, Director
Lok Vigyan Kendra, Almora

Dear Mr Raghavan,

You have launched the magazine with a bang, to use an expression you have employed elsewhere in another context. The 1857 episode has been aptly presented in your first issue highlighting certain aspects little known and less debated. The contemporary scenario is one in which we need to draw inspiration and guidance from the events of 1857 in order to counter the mammoth offensive against our sovereignty today. To be equal partners in development is not the same as serving while being subordinates. The heroes of 1857 refused to be subservient to authoritarian masters as you have brought out in the magazine. There is an imperative need to assert the positive aspects of our legacy so that we may move forward with dignity and confidence. Your venture contributes a lot in that direction. I only hope that the response from your readers will be equally encouraging. Jingoism and irrationalism have to be eschewed for any meaningful advance, which you mean to accomplish in the days to come.

Regards and best wishes.
Dr G. Ramakrishna
Editor, Hosathu
Bangalore

Dear Editor,

I am ready to provide all assistance I can...the only proviso is this, mujhe ek chhoti si kitab research karke pichhle saal deni thi, magar talash-e rozgar aur idhar udhar ke tamashon ne usko hone nahin diya, ab aainda char maheenon mein voh mujhe khatm karni hai, par aap hukm karein..

Mahmood Farooqui
Delhi

Dear Editor,

I have read the maiden issue of "Ghadar Jari Hai" and found it to be a very progressive take on the great 1857 Indian war of Independence. The layout is very creative and I especially liked the story about the "Tax Collector" and the poems. People should contribute their creative inputs to this magazine and I hope that its readership expands. The articles are all well written and provide much food for thought about the condition of people today and the magazine's name fittingly says "Ghadar Jari Hai". The struggle goes on ! I wish that articles about the lesser-known facts of 1857 be published so that we may be able to appreciate the history better. This is an extremely laudable endeavour by Lok Awaz Publishers and Distributors to spread the message of people's power so that more people join the "GJH" campaign. All the best and I am eagerly awaiting the arrival of the coming issues.

Nirmala Mathew,
Mumbai

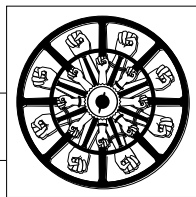
Dear Editor,

Ghadar Jari Hai magazine is a breath of fresh air in the heavily polluted media that exists today. The media, by and large, is polluted with trivia, narrow mindedness, irrationality, euro-centric and other biases and pornography. Today's media is a reflection of the domination of big moneyed interests in society and it is aimed at disorienting the masses from seeking solutions to the serious problems facing the society. Bringing out *Ghadar Jari Hai* magazine at this time is a welcome step.

With regard to the premier issue of *Ghadar Jari Hai* magazine focusing on the Ghadar of 1857, it is refreshing to see serious effort being put into freeing scholarship from Euro-centric biases.

Continued on Page 37





Cover Story

When will be India's Tryst with Destiny?

Did the transfer of power represent the successful culmination of India's struggle against colonialism, asks Prakash Rao

Was 1947 destined? Was colonialism a misfortune?

Did all the anti-colonial struggles from 1757 to 1857 and 1947 culminate in their fulfillment through the transfer of power?

These are some of the questions that arise, as we celebrate this year, the 60th anniversary of independence.

Tryst: *a private romantic rendezvous between lovers*

Destiny: *fate, events that will necessarily happen to a person in the future.*

(Oxford English Dictionary)

Jawaharlal Nehru's speech, "Tryst with Destiny", on the midnight of August 14, 1947 in the Constituent Assembly, which thereafter constituted itself into the Indian Parliament, has been hailed as one of the greatest speeches of the 20th century.

Perhaps there were attenuating circumstances that prevented an objective evaluation of the speech and the accompanying transfer of power. The massacres of Hindus and Muslims accompanied by the partition of India, the peasantry in undivided Bengal rising up in arms in the Tebhaga movement, the unprecedented mutiny of the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy, widespread peasant struggle against zamindars in Telangana, uprisings in Manipur and Nagaland, and so on.

However, when we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of independence this year, our objectivity is not clouded by any of those circumstances. The short speech by Nehru is full of flowery language, but short on facts.

Nehru's oft-quoted speech in essence said that India has gone through a period of misfortune

and was determined to overcome its condition and take its destined place among the great civilisations of the world. Moreover, that had been achieved, "not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially" through the transfer of power.

This characterisation of the history of British colonialism and Indian people's struggle against it, has rarely been challenged and has become the official grand narrative. Was 1947 destined? Was colonialism a misfortune? Did all the anti-colonial struggles from 1757 to 1857 and 1947 culminate in their fulfillment through the transfer of power?

These are some of the questions that arise, as we celebrate this year, the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Plassey; the 150th anniversary of the great Ghadar of 1857, the birth centenary of Bhagat Singh and the 60th anniversary of independence.

Of course, there are a whole lot of apologists of the transfer of power who will hide behind Nehru's phrase "not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially" and ask, is life in independent India worse than under British rule? Do we want a throw back to pre-British conditions? Have we not achieved anything in the last sixty years... ad nauseum. But that is a diversion.

An overwhelming majority of our population was born after those moments of euphoria in 1947, which makes it incumbent upon us that we

**European interest in India
was not because it was
a backward country, but
because it was such an
advanced country which
would be a great asset to
them if colonized.**

go back in history and recapitulate the important events and trends to make an objective assessment of what took place in 1947.

Firstly, India was a prosperous country contributing, according to some estimates, nearly 25% of the world GDP by the 1700s. Its manufactures were marveled at, and one estimate gives the figure of 60% as the contribution of India and China to world manufacture of those days. India's metallurgy in the field of zinc, bronze and steel was pioneering and its products were coveted all over the world. It had a well-developed agriculture and a well-kept system of hydraulics for drinking water and irrigation. It had a town planning tradition of nearly five thousand years. Many of its temples and mausoleums were aesthetically pleasing and at the same time based on very sound construction engineering. Sciences like health care, mathematics, astronomy and logic were very advanced. Arab mathematicians transmitted algebra and trigonometry from India to Europe, and so on.

Moreover, there was a healthy atmosphere of coexistence of different contending philosophies, religions and sects, with none claiming

the monopoly of absolute truth. Retrogressive social practices like the caste system, gender discrimination or looking down on manual labour were being challenged and there were constant rebellions in the form of the Bhakti-Sufi movement. Clearly, there was right to conscience and right to free association and organization.

It is important to recall and record these facts, not to wallow in the past, but to be aware that European interest in India was not because it was a backward country, but because it was such an advanced country which would be a great asset to them colonized. In fact, until the early 1800s there was a severe problem for the East India Company as there was a net outflow of gold and silver from England to India. Indians simply did not find much in England worth importing.

When the Europeans came as traders, Indians had no problem with that because India had traded for several millennia with different parts of the world. But the collapse of the Mughal empire and the absence of a single unifying political power in India provided an opportunity for the adventurers and mercenaries of the East India Company to participate in the rivalries of some princes. This, combined with the treachery of some of the princes, led to the conquest of Bengal after the Battle of Plassey.

The British soon set about plundering India rather than trading, and exacting heavy taxes from the peasantry. To their surprise, British administrators like Philip Francis and Cornwallis found that there was no private ownership of land in India in the European manner.

Hence, the Permanent Settlement was conceived and developed.

Under Pitt's India Act (1784), it was specifically mentioned that land in Bengal ought to be settled with zamindars on a permanent basis.

After a prolonged debate among the policy makers, the Permanent Settlement was finally concluded in March 1793. Under the rules of the Permanent Settlement, zamindars and other landholders were declared as absolute proprietors of land. The zamindari land was made freely transferable and inheritable. The lands of the tax defaulting zamindars were made liable to be sold in public auction for recovery of arrears.

Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in the hope that the new system would impel zamindars to become landlords like their counterparts in England. He hoped that the operation of the Permanent Settlement would lead finally to an industrial revolution via an inevitable agricultural transformation in the country. That is, he very consciously sowed the seeds of capitalism. According to Indian custom, land was a natural resource and nobody owned it. Peasants had the right to till it and the duty to pay taxes to the king so that he can look after public works, support education, scholarship and health care, besides providing them with security from invading marauders. This system aimed at providing "sukh" and "suraksha." The king similarly had the right to levy a certain amount of tax on land and use it for public good. If he extracted unreasonable tax, engaged in frequent wars and neglected public works, then he was considered an inefficient tyrant, not fit to be a king. Indian custom considered killing such a king permissible.

The zamindar (variously also

known as jagirdar, talukdar, paleygar, deshmuks, sardeshmuks etc in different parts of the country) was part of the King's tax collecting machinery. He had some judicial powers and also had the duty to contribute men and materials during a war. He was not the owner of land. Thus, ownership rights to the land conferred on the zamindar, which was alienable, rentable and inheritable, was until then unknown in India. Thereafter, the peasantry for the first time faced evictions, which led to destitution, famines and mass migration.

In essence, the British nationalized the land on behalf of the Crown and then privatized part of it.

This led to a series of uprisings in different parts of the country. The British took several other steps besides this fundamental change in social relations. In order to earn more and more revenue they started an aggressive annexation policy, breaking all their promises and treaties with various princes from Awadh and Jhansi to Mysore, Kithur and Satara. To bridge the deficit in the balance of payments and sell more British goods in India, they destroyed the manufacturing base in India, especially in textiles. This created mass unemployment among weavers. On top of it, they created armies of Indians to help them expand the colonies. These armies called Bengal Army, Madras Army and Bombay Army, of which the Bengal Army was the largest, were frequently used in many wars in India as well as abroad. The sepoys of these armies were fed up of being used as cannon fodder.

All these factors coalesced to ignite the conflagration of 1857. This is not the place to go into the details of this glorious chapter in In-

Nehru and the Mountbattens

dia's struggle for freedom. However, it is clear from the Great Ghadar that artisans, peasants, middle strata, intelligentsia and even democratic and patriotic elements from the ruling classes could be mobilized in India for this struggle. The aims of the uprising as expressed in various firmans of the ghadaris were: to overthrow colonialism, to preserve the Indian way of life and to open the avenues to people deciding their own future irrespective of faith, caste, language, tribe, and ideology.

The British put down this uprising with great ferocity by using Indians against Indians. Revenge killings afterwards led to genocidal figures of over ten million according to Dr Amaresh Misra. It also led to destruction of the economy of the Ganga valley with mass migrations of millions of peasants and weavers and other artisans.

Perhaps the British understood the lessons better than the Indians. The next 90 years, from 1857 to 1947, witnessed the systematic application of British statecraft to see that Indians remained divided, with one section actually deluding itself that British rule would do good to India if some excesses were removed!

The new colonial programme after Victoria's proclamation in-



volved the following: carry forward the creation of the social classes in whose interest it was that the British continue to rule; encourage loyal capitalists, merchants, moneylenders, intellectuals and zamindars; destroy and demonise all old forms and sources of knowledge, social organizations and economic organization, create a new intelligentsia that was full of self-hate, which would serve the colonial state and consider Europe as the source of all enlightenment; ally with the most backward and reactionary elements in the old society; physically eliminate all remnants and reminders of the Ghadar with a scorched earth policy; create institutions and political parties and administration -- in other words the superstructure of a new civil society -- based on the new

task of defence of private property.

The Congress Party was founded in 1885 to act as a safety valve. It put forward the interests of the new loyal classes in front of the British administration and these interests would be accommodated in the colonial system. Similarly, the British created in subsequent years other parties and organisations like the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Justice Party and so on as “defenders” of interests of various minorities and castes. Along with the Congress, all of them worked to split the anti-colonial struggles and were co-opted into the system as representatives of divisions in Indian society. They were also used by the British to repeatedly show that Indian society was deeply divided and that Indians would kill each other if left to themselves and that only British rule could unite India.

As for shaping the new administration and the judiciary, the mantra was: suspect every Indian as a potential rebel; and build an administrative and judicial structure based on that fundamental belief, while claiming that ‘the accused is innocent till proven guilty’...

Other elements of British rule were: take away the right of the people to bear arms, form associations, start newspapers etc. except under strictly monitored conditions; create a system of commissions of enquiry to whitewash state terrorism and genocide to pacify enraged people, and use political leaders to demand the formation of such commissions; force upon Indians the cultivation of cash crops like indigo, cotton, opium, tea and so on, destroying the food security of the village economy; allow Indians, who had been loyal to the Crown a share in this project of “industrializing the colony”, by letting

Radhakrishnan, JRD Tata and Nehru

them set up jute and textile mills and so on; create adverse tariff conditions so that wealth was drained out of India through unequal trade and differential tariffs; create divisions among Indians based on communal and caste-based reservation in the electorate and organise sectarian violence; create the essence of a multi party system by encouraging “moderates” and “extremists” to fight with each other within the parameters set by colonialists; label all uncompromising fighters as terrorists and threats to civil society and law and order, and use black laws against them.

Thus was the foundation of colonial statecraft laid and consolidated. However, the Indian people did not accept this consolidation of the colonial state. They repeatedly rose up in rebellion. There are scores of examples of these from the northeast to northwest and from the south to the north of India.

**When the British were
faced with the revolutionary
upsurge and the prospect
of “losing control” of
India, they decided to
transfer power to the loyal
leadership of Congress and
Muslim League**



The Indian people certainly did not think that colonialism was a “misfortune” and wait for a mere transfer of power while keeping the colonial foundations intact, as Jawaharlal Nehru seems to suggest.

When the British were faced with the revolutionary upsurge and the prospect of “losing control” of India, they decided to transfer power to the loyal leadership of the Congress and Muslim League. To ensure that the Indian subcontinent remained a base for imperialism and the people were weakened and at logger heads with each other, the British organised the partition of India on communal lines, followed by a communal blood bath and mass migration of millions of people. To this day the people of this subcontinent are burdened by the partition and the inherited animosity, and have become a vast market for arms merchants of the world.

Can we then call this colonial experience a result of “misfortune” as Nehru does? Nehru himself was not

a fatalist and was quite a rationalist. Then why this recourse to fatalism if not to prettify colonialism?

Hidden behind the euphoria of Independence Day, what actually happened on the night of August 14 and the events leading up to it? The independence of India, or more appropriately, transfer of power, as British themselves called it, meant that the Governor General would henceforth be responsible to the new Constituent Assembly and not to the British Crown. The whole edifice of the colonial state created for the plunder of India and defence of capitalism remained intact. The imperialist investments and assets were not confiscated or nationalized.

Before 1857, the Governor General administered India according to the dictates of London. This rule lacked any kind of legitimacy as it was established by military force. After 1857, the British moved towards legitimizing their rule and began a process of introducing “representative government” i.e. one that has some representation of Indians in it. This was later refined to “responsible government” i.e. an executive that would be responsible to an elected parliament.

In 1909 elections were introduced in the provinces and the center but at the center the Indians were in a minority. Elections were based on religion and property. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League made an agreement in 1916 (Lucknow Pact) on the division of communal constituencies (still based on property). The Governor General of course was only responsible to London.

The 1935 Government of India Act gave the power to legislate on some affairs to the parliament but

What kind of tryst with destiny is this? Unless we break with this colonial legacy and colonisation of our minds, India cannot be free

still kept defence and foreign affairs in the hands of London. It also created a federation of British India and princely states. Provincial legislatures were elected accordingly in 1937 and in 1946. It was from these provincial assemblies (whose elections were conducted on the basis of limited franchise) that members of the Constituent Assembly were “elected”. The Indian Independence Act 1947 made the Governor General responsible to the Constituent Assembly from Aug 15, 1947. This represented the transfer of power.

In 1950, with a new constitution, a Republic came into being cutting off the umbilical tie with the British crown. The Constituent Assembly became the parliament until the first general elections held in 1952. A Constitution was proclaimed in the name of the people while creating a trustee state. This is periodically, legitimized through universal franchise and a system of representative democracy that marginalizes people and is run with the help of parties that vow to uphold the constitution.

All rights proclaimed in the Constitution were annulled elsewhere in the same Constitution in the name of threat to internal security or external security and interests of the state, while the economic and electoral system made sure that the big-



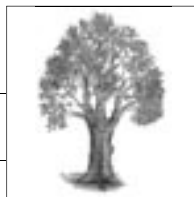
Dhirubhai Ambani of Reliance

gest capitalists defined the interests of state and society. A union was imposed on the various nationalities, tribes and regions.

The *Sukh* and *Raksha* of people were left as desirable goals in the Directive Principles of the Constitution while the fundamental law defended private property. Other than these changes, the fundamentals of the system remain the same as those created by the British after 1858.

What kind of tryst with destiny is this? Unless we break with this past, this colonial legacy and colonisation of our minds, India cannot be free, the aim of the Great Ghadar of 1857 would be unfulfilled. The claim being made by many representatives of the government that 1857 successfully culminated in 1947, with the added Nehruvian caveat “not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially”, is facetious. ■

Prakash Rao is spokesperson of Communist Ghadar Party of India and the All India Convenor of Lok Raj Sangathan



Peepul Ke
Neeche

In Conversation with...

Amaresh Misra, author of 'War of Civilisations: 1857 AD' meets with Shivanand to talk about the Great Ghadar of 1857

Shivanand: *The absence of well researched books on 1857 authored by Indians, prior to 1947 can be understood because of the colonial censorship, (Savarkar's being an exception), but why is it that there are so few post-independence? What are the real difficulties a historian faces while writing on 1857?*

Amaresh: 1857 is a bugbear and an obsession. Many Indian and European writers have lost their focus and minds while studying the event. It is a very Asiatic, indigenous event. Its true study requires the explosion of Eurocentric and hitherto established Anglo-Indian perspectives. It also requires an insight into the Urdu-Persian-Awadhi-Islam-Sanatana Dharma-Mughal-Maratha-Sikh peasant world. The task, simply, is too overwhelming. It is beyond the grasp of most of our city bred and English-speaking historians. For me too, a hardened scholar and political activist schooled in being unsentimental, it was very difficult maintaining the necessary distance from the material. I wrote the book, literally with a lump in my throat. I was drained emotionally.

In fact, most of the books on 1857, by Indian authors, lack even a rudimentary sense of nationalist, pro-people consciousness, or a passion for objective fact finding. Interestingly, sincere work on 1857 has only four examples--VD Savarkar's pioneering effort, Sunder Lal's 'Bharat

men Angrezi Raj' in Hindi, Ram Vilas Sharma's 'San Sattavan ki Rajya Kranti aur Marxvaad' again in Hindi, and PC Joshi's '1857: a symposium'. Savarkar today is a symbol of the Right. Ram Vilas Sharma and PC Joshi belonged to the Left.

Shivanand: *What sources have you looked at to get the panoramic story of 1857?*

Amaresh: Original manuscripts, British primary and secondary accounts, Urdu, Persian, Awadhi, and even Arabic records--you name it--from London to Patna. Gazetteers gathering dust in various Government departments were of particular help. I also included unpublished material, especially accounts in Hindi and Urdu. Another source was oral history, which I tried using to give a subjective perspective of participants in 1857 wars. A lot of work in English has been done by regional intellectuals and academicians, people concerned with bringing out what happened in 1857 in e.g. Orissa, Gujarat, Assam and the North East. These works were very helpful.

Shivanand: *It has been a matter of great speculation, whether the Ghadar was planned before the mutinies started breaking out in the Bengal Army. What has been your conclusion?*

Amaresh: Yes it was planned. It was a mass movement. But there seems to have been no fixed date, though the March-April-May months

seem to have been fixed. Initially efforts were made to rouse the Bengal based Regiments. Meerut came to the fore after the Mangal Pandey incident and the failure of the Behrampore-Barrackpore rising. Bahadur Shah Zafar, Wajid Ali Shah, Nana Saheb, Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah, Kunwar Singh and all other principal actors were active even before 1856 and Awadh's annexation. Waliullahites, revolutionary followers of Shah Waliullah, the 18th century Muslim cleric and social scientist--India's Rousseau and Adam Smith combined into one--were following the Dar-ul-Harb fatwa issued by Shah Abdul Aziz (Shah Waliullah's son) in 1803. The Fatwa made it imperative for every religious Muslim to make India's Independence his or her religious duty. The Fatwa was a watershed. It started a jihad, with anti-British, peasant revolution as its focus in Punjab and Bengal in the 1820s and 30s. Waliullahites, whom the British erroneously called Wahabis, were active in the 1840s. They were committed anti-imperialist activists, a bit like Marxists of today. They had a network running from Hazara to Barrackpore. They were the ones who established a concord of Islam with Sanatan Dharma Hindus, in order to foment a rising against the British.

Shivanand: *Was there a conscious attempt to spread the flames of the uprising all over India?*

Amaresh: Yes--Bahadur Shah Zafar had established study circles, on the pattern of old Mughal Pir-Murid structure. Nana Saheb and Azimullah Khan had visited all major stations of North India in some guise or the other. Sadhus and Maulavis were found preaching 'sedition' from Gilgit in Kashmir to Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Right through May and June 1857, leaflets appeared in all the centres of the Bombay Army and Madras Army, saying specifically that Bahadur Shah Zafar had been reinstated as 'The Emperor of India' and the British Raj was over. Then during the 1857 war, mass actions in North and West India exhibited amazing coordination. The Neemuch Brigade was moving from Neemuch to Agra, where a large British garrison was stationed. The British Persian Expedition Force landed in Bombay. Under Colonel Woodburn, a British field force set forth from Bombay via Marathwada to intercept the Neemuch force. But the June 1857 risings in Aurangabad, Nagpur and several other Marathwada-Vidarbha regions delayed Woodburn's advance. The Neemuch Brigade was able to reach Agra on 5th July and defeat the British.

Shivanand: *Often the leaders of Ghadar have been painted with the broad brush of decadent feudalism. What was the vision of the leaders of the Ghadar, for an India freed from the colonial yoke, in political, social and economic terms?*

Amaresh: The 1857 programme offered: State aid for trade, State protection to indigenous industries, land to the tiller, substantial salaries to middle class professionals,



**Lucknow Residency,
location of a major
battle between British
and the Ghadris**

irrigation to agriculture, economic and socio-political patronage and economic incentives to intellectuals, power to the peasant and the village panchayat, self respect to every Indian, freedom of faith and expression, equality to castes, and the aggressive revival of Indian nationalism based on Ganga-Yamuna Tehzeeb. Therefore, the 1857 programme was one of, in Marxist terms, a progressive, nationalist, bourgeois-democratic revolution. To say that they, the 1857 leaders, were feudal and decadent is a cruel, Eurocentric joke.

Shivanand: *India of the 18th century has been painted as dark, full of superstition, with customs like sati, no development of science and technology, no visionary political and military leadership, no feeling of patriotism, with various princes and nawabs wallowing in petty self interest and so on. Hence, it is said, the East India Company could intervene and take over territory easily. How true is that picture?*

Amaresh: Nothing can be further from the truth. Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur built his observatory in the 18th century. The circulation

of blood theory, originally discovered by Bhava Misra in the 16th century, acquired further development. It was in this period that Indian entrepreneurship flourished. The Mughal State itself was a military-entrepreneur State. In the Indian

context, the army always represented 'peasants in uniform'. Mughal capitalism was peasant, and not burgher driven. The class basis of Mughal capitalism was different fundamentally from European capitalism. In the 18th century, Mysore, Maratha and the Sikh powers were all competitive, modernized, bourgeois princedom, as much as England was a bourgeois State. In fact, the East India Company was attracted by Indian development and not underdevelopment. In the 18th century not one but two Industrial Revolutions were proceeding apace--one in India and one in Europe. The Indian revolution was killed to finance the European one.

Shivanand: *Based on the treachery of a few Sikh princes it has been said that Sikhs did not participate in the uprising. What does your research show?*

Amaresh: It was only the Sikh Princes of the cis-Sutlej area--Patiala, Kapurthala, Nabha, Jind--who sided with the British. But they had opposed even Ranjit Singh--in fact remnants of Ranjit Singh's Khalsa army fought for Bahadur Shah Zafar at Sialkot, Ferozepur, Amritsar,

Gurdaspur, Lahore, right up till Ambala. At Ropar, Mohar Singh declared a Khalsa Raj under Bahadur Shah Zafar. Then even the cis-Sutlej Sikh soldiers revolted in Benaras, Jaunpur and Mhow in 1857, and then again at Dera Ismail Khan in 1858.

Shivanand: *What role did Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious organizations and individuals play during the uprising?*

Amaresh: Swami Vrijanand, Swami Omnanand, Swami Purnanand, Dayanand Saraswati, Shirdi Saibaba, the Dwaraka-Badrinath-Puri-Sringeri Shankaracharyas all played crucial roles. The religious Shaiv, Vaishnav and Naga akhadas played a major role. Lalpuri Gosain, the descendant of Anupgiri, a major 18th century leader of an entrepreneur/ascetic order, fought in Nana Saheb's army. From Delhi to Hyderabad, via Deoband and West UP, the Muslim Ulema and Waliullahites, played a memorable role. They acted as propagandists and fighters. Then Sikh leaders of the later Namdhari-Kuka movement supported the revolution.

Shivanand: *You have made the startling claim that over 10 million people were killed by the British in revenge for the uprising. Can you substantiate the claim?*

Amaresh: It seems that fearing defeat, the British initiated a policy of mass killings. Indians, especially of UP, have grown up with tales of British atrocities during the Ghadar. But till date, no historian has ever tried to put a figure on how many Indians died. Whole cities were looted, innocents were massacred, villages razed to the ground. The killings were so massive that Awadh and Bhojpur faced a labor slump till the 1890s. More than 20,00,000

letters returned back from Awadh addresses. British labor surveys and road department reports state clearly that more than 25,00,000 died in Awadh alone. Records of the Muslim Ulema, and Hindu akhadas also show that more than 50,00,000 of their people and followers died. In Bhojpur and Bihar, labor records show a 25% slump. Calculating backwards I reached the first approximate figure of 10 million.

Shivanand: *The destruction of the economy of Indo-Gangetic plain especially what is called Bi-Ma-R-U, (Bihar-Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan-Uttar Pradesh) seems to be linked to 1857.*

Amaresh: Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia spoke about the 'forced' backwardness of the Hindi-Urdu belt, or BI-MA-R-U (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) area, specifically due to 1857. I too have mentioned the fact that it was because of the massive killings in the region, details of which are there in the answers sent, that labor was not available for even the kind of meagre development colonial authorities were prepared for. This is apart from the fact that, fearing Hindi-Urdu belt's radical potentialities, the British deliberately refrained from developing it. In fact, colonial development was restricted to Calcutta and Bombay, mainly because the colonial middle classes there supported the British during 1857. Nearly all intellectuals of the Bengal renaissance supported the British. This should not be taken as an outright condemnation of the 19th century Bengal impulse, though it was definitely not a renaissance. The real Indian renaissance started during Akbar's time and was continuing until the 18th century when the British cut it short. The pre-British Indian renaissance

was in fact more 'modern' than the Bengal one. It was indigenous. In Europe, Martin Luther's act of translating the Bible from Latin into German is considered the revolutionary turning point of the European quest for renaissance and enlightened progress. In India Tulsidas translated and reinterpreted the Sanskrit Ramayana into Awadhi in the 16th century. Shah Waliullah translated the Koran from Arabic into Persian in the 18th century and later his son Shah Abdul Aziz (author of the famous patriotic fatwa) published the Koran in Urdu. So even going by the European yardstick, renaissance had already occurred in India before the British came. It is only because of the tendency of Indian English speaking intellectuals to look down upon our indigenous languages and tradition that we see 'renaissance' in the efforts of 19th century conservative, metropolitan elites to effect a minimum of reform, and that too in a pro-colonial framework. The Bengal-Bombay renaissance in fact laid the basis of colonial modernity with all its attendant problems of communalism and fascism. ■

Amaresh Misra is a well known historian, free-lance journalist, civil rights activist and script writer. In all his works, the effort has been to dispel stereotypes of western 'Orientalism', and invoke the diverse influences of Indian cultures and nationalities. His new book, War of Civilisations: 1857 AD (Rupa & Co) is soon to be published. His other works include 'Lucknow: Fire of Grace', a city biography, 'The Minister's Wife', a novel, and 'Mangal Pandey: The true story of an Indian Revolutionary'. He has been contributing profusely about the Great Ghadar in the mass media.



Events

Resonances

Aligarh —Compilation “1857- Continuity and Change” released at a special function

In the last week of May, a special bumper issue of the literary journal “*Udbhawana*” was released at a public function in Aligarh. This special bumper issue of over 500 pages is dedicated to the 1857 Ghadar and is entitled “1857 — *Nirantarta aur Parivartan*” or 1857 - continuity and change”. It is a work in Hindi consisting of articles on different aspects of 1857 by different authors, which has been edited by Prof Pradeep Saxena of the Hindi Department of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

The function was jointly organized by the Hindi Department of the AMU and the Janwadi Lekhak Sangh (Democratic Writers Association). The function was graced by some of the most well known figures in the fields of history and Hindi literature. Well known historian Irfan Habib gave the main speech at the function. The editor of *Udbhavana*, Shri Ajay Kumar, the editor of the compilation “1857-*Nirantarta aur Parivartan*”, Dr Pradeep Saxena, renowned literary critic Prof Namwar Singh, member of the presidium Dr Namita Singh, and the Chairperson of the presidium Prof Kunwarpal Singh were amongst those who contributed to the discussion. Shri Ajay Bisariya conducted the proceedings. At the beginning of the seminar, Dr Ramesh Kumar read out the firman

or proclamation of Khan Bahadur Khan.

Professor Saxena elaborated on the title of the compilation, “continuity and change”. He pointed out that the title was to reflect the changes in the assessment of the events of 1857 over time. In 1957, at the time of the centenary of the Ghadar, there was very little material available. Now, 50 years further on, there is a wealth of hitherto undiscovered material available, on the basis of which assessment and reassessment of 1857 is continuously taking place.

Delhi — Communist School on the Great Ghadar

At around 9 a.m., students started entering the makeshift classroom in a trickle that soon grew into a steady flow accompanied by babble characteristic of the restless and expectant. It was a special class of history - a subject many dread - and it was to stretch for hours on the one weekly holiday, Sunday. Yet, the excitement of the students would have made any teacher entering a class green with envy. They were no ordinary students, and this was no routine history class. Girls, boys, men and women of all ages and backgrounds speaking diverse languages from across the country hugged, laughed and shook hands with the warmth normally reserved for the closest of friends. That many hadn't previous-

ly met anyone else in the class didn't appear to matter to them. The students were communists or men and women influenced by communist views and ideals. They had gathered in Delhi, on June 9, to draw lessons for the present from the heroic struggles waged by the Indian people in 1857 against the mighty British Empire to gain freedom from colonial and other forms of exploitation.

Organised by Lok Awaz Publishers and Distributors, the class was aimed at understanding the linkages between present day battles against capitalist oppression and struggles of the past.

The Urdu word Ghadar means “revolution”, “rebellion” and “uprising.”

The uprising of 1857 - unparalleled in history in many ways - was certainly a Ghadar.

As the lecturer explained: “No Ghadar starts overnight.”

The seeds of revolt against oppression, he said, had been sowed long before 1857.

And the Ghadar of 1857, proclaimed the posters on the walls, is not over.

The school began with an inaugural keynote speech by Comrade Lal Singh, General Secretary of the Communist Ghadar Party of India entitled “*Ghadar ki goonj amar rahe...*” “Long live the reverberations of the Ghadar of 1857”.

Through penetrating analysis and argument, he brought out

that what happened in 1857 and before and after that, continues to impinge on our lives till today. Not only did the colonialists carry out a physical genocide of our people. The worst thing was that they carried out a systematic cultural genocide.

Indian intellectuals have been taught to look down at our own history and culture, and our philosophy. We have been fed with Eurocentric ideas and theories on all fronts. This has led to a big vacuum in our country, a gap between the educated classes and the masses of workers and peasants. Combating Eurocentrism is essential in order that India can march on the high-road of civilisation, he said.

The class was conducted in three sessions. The first dwelt on the several struggles against the British East India Company, that culminated in the Ghadar of 1857.

A lecture followed on the simultaneous tactics of appeasing some sections on Indians, while using the strategy of 'divide and rule' to break the unity of the revolutionary masses, following 1857. The British Queen took over the reins of India from the East India Company, the lecturer explained.

The last session focused on the betrayal of the hopes and dreams of crores of Indians post 1947, and the battles for genuine people's power that have continued since what is officially described as India's independence.

Though the sessions each had a distinct focus, they melted into each other in a manner that demonstrated how a six hour long class could, if conducted properly, hold the attention of students through a heady journey through the past:

-from the threats the Brit-

ish faced from tribal communities across India's central regions – now the states of Jharkhand, Orissa, Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh - to struggles on a more national scale.

-from the heroes of those innumerable battles that peppered the years of British rule, to the traitors among the upper classes who cost India's fighting masses victory.

-from the manner in which those traitors were trained and groomed before being rewarded with the reins of "independent" India, to the grim reality that the same classes control India's vast fortunes today.

The avid attention with which students listened to the lectures, was in no small measure due to the techniques of pedagogy used.

Colourful slides with maps, sketches, paintings and portraits of key events and players in India's history of the last 250 years would leap up to renew the enthusiasm of the students.

And if the slides got too strenuous, the lecturer was ready with a bag full of anecdotes to liven up the class.

The class ended with a long question-and-answer session, where students were encouraged to clarify any doubts with the lecturer.

"Do not think before asking whether the question you ask will be mocked. There is no question that is not worthy of being asked," said Comrade Lal Singh, General Secretary of the Communist Ghadar Party of India, setting the tone for the discussion.

If the class started with warm camaraderie, it ended with the song that symbolizes the internationalism that Communism stands for.

"Tis the final conflict, let each stand in his place. The Internatio-

nale shall be the human race," sang the students.

Charu

(Note: A similar school was organised by Lok Awaz Publishers in Mumbai – Thane on July 15th)

Commemoration of 1857 in Southall, London

An important meeting was held at Dominion Centre, in Southall in early June to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the great Ghadar. The meeting was supported by Indian Workers Association(GB), Respect (Ealing – Southall), South Asia Solidarity Group and South Asia Society.

The meeting reflected the unity of the Indian working class and people with the British working class and people against capitalism and imperialism. It was addressed by many speakers, including Dalvinder Atwal, leader of Indian Workers Association (GB), Lindsay German, the London Mayoral candidate for the organisation Respect, Salvinder Dhillon from Respect and the IWA (GB), Arman Riazzy from the International League for Peoples Struggle, Paramjit Bains, a leading representative of the Gate Gourmet workers, Oliver New, a trade unionist and a local community activist, and Anwar Dholan from the South Asia Society.

Speakers detailed the crimes of British imperialism, in the past and the present, and drew parallels with the way the imperialists had exploited Ireland and India, and how they are aggressing on Iraq and Afghanistan today.

The meeting concluded with a call for strengthening the unity of the working class in Britain and of the people of the world in the strug-

gle against imperialism and capitalist exploitation.

Tamil Nadu — massive public campaign begins

A Ghadar Jari Hai Campaign has been launched in Tamilnadu. Nearly sixty organizations of workers, peasants and women -- under the leadership of the Unorganised Sector Workers federation, NAPM and the Lok Raj Sangathan -- came together in November 2005 to conduct a state-wide campaign on the current political process and the necessity for people to take power in their own hands. These organizations have come together under the banner of the Ghadar Jari Hai Campaign.

In the last week of May, activists from Makkalatchi Iyakkam (Lok Raj Sangathan), Katada Thozhilar Panchayat Sangham, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, Pennurimai Iyakkam, Simpson General workers Union, Unorganized Workers Federation, All India Hand Embroidery Workers Union, Federation of Construction Workers Unions, Makkal Mandrum - Kanchipuram, Marxiya Meignana Koodam, Indian Republic Workers Union, and Domestic Workers Union conducted a planning meeting to work out the details of the campaign.

On June 17th, the Committee met again in Chennai and decided that massive district level campaigns will be held in the months of August-October throughout the length and breadth of the state. District-level campaign committees were set up and plans were made to prepare propaganda material for the campaign consisting of posters, leaflets, booklets, presentations, songs, etc.

Along with popularizing the struggles of people everywhere, and

particularly Tamil Nadu, against the British colonialists, the Committee also decided to campaign on current issues facing the working people of Tamil Nadu. Workers belonging to the unorganized sector have been campaigning for a comprehensive legislation on social security ensuring their recognition as workers and protecting their rights such as security of work and livelihood. Workers, peasants and the residents of the area have been determinedly opposing this land grab and the plan to set up SEZ's in the state.

Several district planning meetings have been held. On June 30th a planning meeting was held in the NAPM office in Madurai to decide on dates and activities for the southern districts. On July 7-9, district level planning meetings were held in Tiruchi, Karaikudi and Tuticorin respectively. It was decided that on August 3rd a massive rally will be held in Sivagangai. In Kanyakumari district, a district-wide mass public campaign will be conducted between August 16-19.

Rally in Palashi, West Bengal

June 23, 2007, marked the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Plassey. On this day, the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah's forces were defeated by Robert Clive of the East India Company through the treachery of Siraj-ud-Daulah's general, Mir Jaffer. It is an important day in the annals of Indian history. While the British drew inspiration from this battle, the patriotic Indians too have learnt their lessons, including the necessity to avenge this defeat.

Colourful banners and hoardings depicting the heroes of the anti colonial liberation struggle and their

words, and announcing a rally to mark this anniversary, were on display along the highways leading up to Palassey.

There is a stone obelisk that has been placed at Palassey by the British colonialists. On the obelisk is inscribed – Battle of Plassey — June 23, 1757. Just outside the boundary of the monument, a bust of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah had been erected overnight for this function. Hoardings of anti-imperialist slogans were put up all around this monument.

On the afternoon of June 23, 2007, thousands of people assembled, braving pouring rain, near this spot in Palashi in Nadia District of West Bengal to participate in a rally to mark the occasion. The rally was organized by the Bangladesh-Bharat-Pakistan Peoples Forum (BBPPF). A 5 member delegation from Bangladesh participated actively in the rally.

The program began with the leaders of the BBPPF garlanding this bust. They then marched towards the maidan where the rally was being held, militantly shouting slogans against imperialism and hailing the unity of the people of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The rally was inaugurated by Shri Haripada Biswas, MLA from the All India Forward Bloc. Those who addressed the rally included Mahbub Alam, Chairman of the Bangladesh Krishak Shramik Awami League and leader of the Bangladesh delegation, Dhananjay Modak, MLA from Kaliganj Assembly Constituency of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, Dr Muktoral Hussain, Minister in Charge of Disaster Management and Agricultural Marketing, and Prakash Rao, spokesperson of the Communist Ghadar Party of India.

Bharat Bangladesh Pakistan People's Forum has also organised mass meetings on 1857 in the May-August period in several places like Kanpur, Bithoor, Jhansi and Lucknow.

Thane — Discussion on the Legacy of Eurocentrism

The Staff Academy of the Joshi Bedekar College, Thane, invited Lok Raj Sangathan to make a presentation on Legacy of Eurocentrism in the Indian Subcontinent in their monthly gathering on 20 July 2007. The meeting was presided over by the College Principal Dr. Shakuntala Singh, Chairperson of the Academy, Ms. Shailaja Nair and two members of Lok Raj Sangathan, Dr. Sanjeewani Jain and Dr. Bharat Seth. The meeting was attended by all the teachers and many non-teaching staff members.

Dr. Bharat Seth elaborated on the achievements of Indian science and technology in pre-colonial India. Through examples from the Indus valley civilization to the beginning of the British rule, he illustrated how the Indians had world-class achievements in the fields of civil engineering, metallurgy, architecture, medicine, mathematics and astronomy, languages, shipping and trade, philosophy and statecraft. He argued that such a high level of accomplishments was impossible without having a broad education system and an environment that encouraged innovation and experimentation. He then provided some statistics of the extent of education through traditional gurukuls, madarsas and pathshalas, as found out by Dharampal from British sources. It has been documented that these traditional schools existed in every village and

it has been estimated that one-third of the population was literate in pre-colonial India. The speaker contrasted this with data for the early twentieth century when literacy figures had come down to less than one-tenth!

Dr. Bharat then proceeded to show how the British destroyed the Indian industry and scholarship due to their greed and because they wanted to impose a Eurocentric view on Indian society. The racist views of Macaulay and others clearly establish the British disregard for Indian knowledge and achievements. The implementation of British policy resulted in mass scale destruction of productive forces and destruction of the intellectual wealth of India. British education inculcated a sense of contempt for our history and culture, a self hatred, and produced flunkies who readily believed whatever the British wrote and had no courage to challenge what was patently false or incongruous. The speaker concluded by saying the challenge in front of the intellectuals was to free all scholarship concerning the developments in the subcontinent from the biased formulations and distortions of colonially influenced authors. He said that the task taken up by the numerous uprisings to overthrow the colonial regime, including the Great Ghadar of 1857, continues today in the form of the struggle to eliminate the influence of the Eurocentric colonial legacy. Ghadar Jari Hai ...

A very lively discussion ensued after the presentation with the participants expressing their indignation and anger at the way British colonial influence continues to this day in the affairs of the state. There was also discussion about

how the British colonial regime divided the Indian society and even encouraged backward practices such as sati. Dr. Sanjeewani highlighted the fact that continuation of the British institutions has left our people totally powerless in being able to influence what happens in our country. She informed the audience about the efforts made by Lok Raj Sangathan in advancing the cause of the empowerment of the people and by the Ghadar Jari Hai... Abhiyan to draw lessons from our past to build a bright future for our people. She invited all the participants to join in these efforts. Copies of the first issue of "Ghadar Jari Hai ..." were eagerly bought by the participants.

Mumbai — Seminar on 1857

An academic seminar was organized in the Mumbai Marathi Granth Sangrahalaya, Dadar on 29 July 2007 by the Lok Raj Sangathan. The seminar was divided into three sessions on the topics:

1. India on the eve of British rule
2. Revolts against British tyranny including the great Ghadar of 1857
3. The legacy of colonialism

In each session there was a keynote address followed by interventions from the participants.

The first keynote presentation, delivered by Dr. Sanjeewani, talked of achievements of the Indian subcontinent and their total negation by the British colonialists, the imposition of Eurocentric ideas and annihilation of the progressive Indian thought material.

The second keynote was presented by Dr. Bharat who refuted the view prevalent in the Indian ruling class that the revolts against the British colonialists were those

of feudals and reactionaries. He demonstrated that the ideas and views espoused by the leaders of the revolts were the most advanced of the times. He also refuted the myth that the revolt of 1857 was limited to only some princes and soldiers. He enumerated dozens of anti-colonial uprisings before and after the Ghadar of 1857 where people from all walks of life were involved. The mere fact that the British rulers had to kill one crore out of a total population of 15 crores in those days is a testimony of the popular nature of the revolt and the brutality of the colonial regime.

In the third keynote address, Girish Bhave elaborated on the meaning of colonial legacy. He went into the content of the "transfer of power" that was designed by the British colonialists in the aftermath of the great revolt of 1857. It was one of the greatest deceptions in the history of the world where in the name of granting freedom, the British colonialists ensured that the laws and the institutions they created in their interests remained intact. Thereby people could not free themselves from the shackles of exploitation and deprivation. He stressed that getting rid of the colonial legacy was the first step to achieving sovereignty and empowerment of the people.

Participants listened to the presentations with rapt attention. Several other papers were presented on topics such as the role of women in struggle against the British, the history and role of the Congress party, the great revolt of 1946 in the Royal Indian Navy, the contribution of the Hindustani Ghadar Party to the anti-colonial struggles, and on the targeting of Muslims by the Indian state.

A large number of youth participated in the Seminar. A number of organizations were represented in the participants, including the Ladhaku Garment Workers Union, SUCI, Prerana, Voltas Union, Kashiipur Solidarity group, and others.

Sivagangai marks the Ghadar

Hundreds of workers gathered in front of the District Collector's Office at Sivagangai on August 3, 2007, in a massive demonstration of unity and resolve to fight for their rights. The rally was organized to commemorate the 150th year of the Ghadar of 1857 as well as to demand a comprehensive legislation for unorganized sector workers. The rally was organized under the banner of "Revolutionary Greetings to Velunachiyar, the liberator of Sivagangai from the British colonizers".

The rally was organised by a number of organizations including Lok Raj Sangathan, NAPM, Unorganized Workers Federation, Kattida Thozhilalar Panchayat Sangam, Pennurimai Iyakkam, and many other unions of construction workers, agricultural workers, tailors, dalits, sanitation workers, village industry workers, and others.

The demonstrators marched through the main bazaar of Sivagangai shouting slogans on issues related to the unorganized sector workers and local issues facing the residents of Sivagangai.

The speakers pointed out that on this occasion of the 150th anniversary of the great Ghadar of 1857, it is important to recall the heroic struggles of our martyrs such as Velunachiyar who liberated Sivagangai from the British colonisers. The struggle for freedom continues today. Lakhs of

unorganized sector workers in the district are unemployed or underemployed. Gypsies (narikuravar) are being thrown into prison for hunting and are being deprived of their livelihood, while at the same time no measures are being taken to create an alternate avenue of livelihood for them.

The speakers highlighted problems faced by women, dalits, fishermen and various other sections of the people, and demanded immediate steps to find a solution to these problems. The rallyists also condemned the eviction of small producers and shopkeepers under the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission and demanded that the state should protect the livelihood and rights of these sections of the people.

Lucknow — Ghadar jari hai... abhiyan organising committee meets

The Ghadar jari hai... abhiyan organising committee held its 3rd meeting on Saturday August 4, 2007 in Lucknow.

The meeting discussed the progress report of the abhiyan in the past three months. It appreciated the newsletter Ghadar Jari Hai... being published regularly as a special insert in Hindi and English respectively by Mazdoor Ekta Lehar and People's Voice. A member of the abhiyan took up the responsibility of publishing the mission statement of the abhiyan in Urdu immediately.

The meeting heard from the report on the response to the first issue of the magazine Ghadar jari hai... There was great appreciation of the fact that in such a short time before the publication of the first issue,

Continued on page page 34



Study

British Rule in India and the Development of the Present Political System

How was the Westminster model transplanted in India, and how were the Indian elite accommodated into it, explains Kamala Sankaran

The bulk of the Indian sub-continent was brought under British control by the eighteenth century. About three-fifths of the country was annexed by the British Crown by war and conquest. The process of conquest was clearly visible in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 with the Nawab of Bengal, followed by wars with the rulers of Mysore, with the Marathas, with the Amirs of Sind and with the Sikhs

in Punjab. Subsequently, in other areas the British did not annex through war. Having established the might of the British army, they were able to 'persuade', through a variety of methods and manoeuvres, (such as the infamous Doctrine of Lapse which entitled the British to take over a state where there was no male heir, Oudh, Jhansi being examples) and replace dynasties which were held to have

lapsed through lack of lawful heirs. The Indian rulers and their civil and military officers were set aside and the people subjected to direct British administration.

Other areas continued to be governed by Indian rulers and these were known as the Indian States. Under various agreements entered into by the British government in India and these rulers, the rulers surrendered the management of their external relations to the British Crown but continued to control under certain conditions the domestic affairs of their States except in cases of 'gross mismanagement.' The ruler was to accept the suzerainty of the British Crown and surrender his external relations with other States to the 'Paramount Power'; to provide military forces if required for the defence of India and to allow the development of railways, roads and communications through his territory. These Indian States were scattered all over India in a haphazard fashion.



**A scene from the
British Parliament**



Indian Parliament

When the British Parliament decided to take a hand in the Company administration, the process of centralisation began. By the Regulating Act of 1773 (i.e. even before the formal subjugation of India to the Crown), the Governor of Bengal became the Governor-General (GG) with power to 'superintend and control' the governments of Madras and Bombay. The areas that the British controlled increased dramatically in the next few decades.

Once India was directly taken over by the Crown in 1858, the British created a post of Secretary of State for India based in London who was responsible to the British Parliament. The Secretary of State in turn operated through the GG based in India. The GG was given plenary powers though he reported to the Secretary of State and hence to the British Parliament. The GG was assisted by an Executive Council which consisted initially of officials only, though the GG was not bound to accept their advice in administrative matters. The GG also performed legislative functions within the broad framework set by the British Parliament. For instance the various Government of India

Acts of 1858, 1909, 1919 and 1935 were all laws enacted by the British Parliament. Only judicial functions were outside the GG's scope as they had been separated from the executive and legislative functions in 1773 itself. A Supreme Court had been set up in Calcutta with a Chief Justice at the head. Later on these were split up into the different High Courts.

Thus all sovereign functions were vested in the Crown and therefore in the British Parliament. The GG operated clearly under the dictates of London. After 1858 we see a process of legitimisation of this rule being carefully carried out by the British. In order to disguise the fact that their rule was alien, they began a process of introducing in India 'representative government', which had representation of Indian people in it. This was refined at a later stage to take in the principle of 'responsible government' i.e. an executive which would be responsible

The British had suffered a rude shock in 1857 when they saw that the kind of 'enlightened and paternal despotism' recommended by Macaulay in the 1830's - when he said India was fit only for an official government (not a parliamentary type) - was being rejected by the people

to an elected Parliament.

The British had suffered a rude shock in 1857 when they saw that the kind of 'enlightened and paternal despotism' recommended by Macaulay in the 1830's - when he said India was fit only for an official government (not a parliamentary type) - was being rejected by the people. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 therefore was passed to establish closer contacts between the government and the governed.

The Act provided for the enlargement of the GG's Executive Council to form a Legislative Council and provided for such reconstituted Provincial Councils in Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Punjab and NWFP. It provided that at least half the new or additional members would be non-officials i.e. outside the civil service. The Council as proposed could only legislate. The governments were not answerable to them. In that sense they did not conform to the British model of a 'responsible' government - responsible to the legislature/parliament. In fact, during the debates in the British Parliament, when the India Council Acts were being debated, speakers likened this expanded Council meant to assist the GG in law-making, to the Indian tradition of *darbar* i.e. the channel from which the ruler learns how his measures are likely to affect his subjects, and may hear of discontent before it becomes disaffection.

The Councils Act of 1892 enlarged the Provincial Councils and empowered them to discuss the budget and ask administrative questions of the Provincial governments. The non-official seats continued to be nominated as the British felt Indians were not ready for elections. The fact was that the party system was just taking shape in India with

the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, an institution whose formation the British were keenly interested in and closely connected with. The nominated seats were to be filled on the basis of the recommendations of religious communities, municipalities, universities, chambers of commerce etc.

Following the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, the principle of election at the Centre (GG's Legislative Council) and in the Provinces was introduced. They were to be based on constituencies based on communities and groups. In the Centre, the officials i.e. non-elected members still retained a majority but in the Provinces the nominated plus elected members had a majority. Indians were also appointed as officials in the GG's and provincial Executive Council as also in the Secretary of State's Council office in London. Thus the principle of representation was introduced in the executive and legislative aspects of the British rule.

Following the growth of the freedom movement in India, the Congress Party demanded the speeding up of constitutional reforms along British lines. The first step in this was the creation of political parties, a process which had begun in 1885 when the Congress Party was formed. The next was the selection from among parties/groups through the method of election of those who would be members of the Legislative Assemblies, to whom in turn the executive government would be responsible. This would complete the constitutional framework of governance along British lines. The major issue was how constituencies/electorates were to be organised in order that Indians could be elected as representa-

In order to disguise the fact that their rule was alien, they began a process of introducing in India 'representative government', which had representation of Indian people in it. This was refined at a later stage to take in the principle of 'responsible government' i.e. an executive which would be responsible to an elected Parliament

tives in the Provincial and Central Legislative Assemblies. The signing of the 'Lucknow Pact' in 1916 between the Congress party and the Muslim League solved a major hurdle with the Congress agreeing to separate electorates on communal lines.

The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms on the basis of which the Government of India Act, 1919 was

drafted was the next, major step. Its main provisions included giving provincial governments relative autonomy in certain subjects free from the control of the central government i.e. the GG's Executive Council. Through the principle of 'dyarchy', vital subjects such as law and order were reserved, to be exercised by the GG and his Executive Council in respect of the Provinces. The rest was 'transferred' to the Indian Ministers responsible to their Provincial Legislatures. The Act converted the existing central Legislative Council into a bi-cameral (two house) legislature for British India directly elected by the electorate. These were the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. Dyarchy was not introduced in the central legislature. The result was that the executive, that is, the GG, was responsible not to the central legislature but to the Secretary of State in London and the British Parliament as before. It introduced a third House, Chamber of Princes, representing the rulers of Indian States having no legislative but only deliberative powers. This was done to facilitate their inclusion gradually into the constitutional framework in the Government of India Act, 1935 and to create one composite Indian State.

Elections to the Provincial Legislative Councils were on the basis of separate electorates for Muslims, and the division of seats between Muslims and the rest was on the ba-



**The Mother
Parliament,
Westminster, London**



**Jawaharlal Nehru
signing the constitution,
January 24, 1950**

sis of the Lucknow Pact. In addition separate electorates were created for Sikhs in Punjab, and Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians in most of the Provinces. Seats were also set aside for landowners and commercial interests. All the elections were based on high property franchise. Similar provisions existed for elections to the Central Legislative Assembly (both Houses). The property qualification for voting was highest for the Council of State, lower for the Central Legislative Assembly and lowest for the Provincial Assembly.

The Congress party now demanded Dominion status i.e. a Government responsible to an elected Indian legislature not to the British Parliament. The Simon Commission and the Round Table Conferences were aimed in this direction. Eventually the British Parliament enacted the Government of India Act, 1935.

The 1935 Act did away with the practice of 'reserved' and 'transferred' subjects. Provinces were

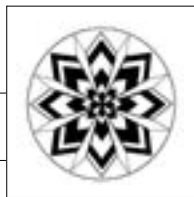
given full autonomy in legislative matters within certain areas. It established 'full responsible government' in the eleven provinces. It established a federation of India comprising both the provinces of British India and the princely Indian States. This provision could not come into force as half the Indian States which needed to ratify the provision did not do so before the War broke out and stalemated the issue. The Act, which abolished dyarchy in the Provinces, reproduced it in the Centre. The subjects of foreign affairs and defence were, 'reserved to the control of the GG i.e. he exercised them on the advice of the Secretary of State in London. The other Central subjects were 'transferred' to central Ministers who were responsible to the Central Legislative Assembly. The members of this latter body were elected indirectly by the Provincial legislatures (unlike in the 1919 Act when they were directly elected). The seats for the elections were on communal lines and separate electorates were continued as also property qualifications for voting.

It was from the provincial legislatures elected in 1937 and then again in 1946 that the members of the Constituent Assembly were elected in 1947. They were responsible for drafting and enacting the constitution of present day India. The India Independence Act, 1947 liberated the GG from the responsibility of reporting to the Secretary of State and hence British Parliament, from the 'appointed day' i.e. 15 August, 1947. He was thenceforth responsible to the Constituent Assembly. In 1950 when the Constitution came into force, the legislative power was transferred to Parliament and the executive power from the GG to the President of In-

It was from the provincial legislatures elected in 1937 and then again in 1946 that the members of the Constituent Assembly were elected in 1947. Elections to the Provincial Legislative Councils were based on communal representation. In addition, seats were set aside for landowners and commercial interests. All the elections were based on high property franchise. They were responsible for drafting and enacting the constitution of present day India

dia and through him to the Cabinet headed by a Prime Minister. Thus the manner in which political power is exercised today and the institutions that wield power have their clear roots in the form of 'responsible' and 'representative' governments that the British designed for their rule over this vast sub-continent. ■

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Reflections

Nupi Lan -Women's War of Manipur

The Nupi Lan of 1939 and the Meira Paibi movement against state terrorism since 1980, in which women have played a leading role, are crucial components of an overall anti-colonial struggle says Malem Ningthouja

The anti-colonial struggle in Manipur that began with the British invasion in 1881 and continues till today has passed through several historical phases and has varied expressions. Before I go deeper into describing the Nupi Lan, I would like to point out however painfully that the Nupi Lan of 1939 and the Meira Paibee movement (against state terrorism) since 1980, in which women have played or continue to play leading role, are crucial components of an overall anti-colonial struggle. Both the events constitute different moments of a continuous trend of anti-colonial struggle under the objective conditions of national subjugation that began with the British rule and was continued by the Government of India. Celebrating the victory of Nupi Lan, therefore, must not overshadow the ongoing movement for democratic revolution.

The outbreak

Historically the Nupi Lan had its immediate cause in the artificial famine of 1939 caused by the profiteering activities of the Mayang (Indian) traders who exported rice to colonial garrisons outside Manipur. When the ban on the export of

rice was lifted in 1939 to the great advantage of the Mayangs, the price of paddy soared up, thus seriously affecting the local petty traders, mostly women, and the poor consumers as well. The atmosphere of agitation was looming with the women traders ready to take a course of action against the inflation and the starving stomachs.

On 12 December 1939 hundreds of women who were demanding an end to the free trade on rice besieged the president of the Manipur Durbar and the officials who came to the rescue of the president. In the scuffle that broke out between the women and the Assam Rifles, twenty-one women and one Indian officer and seven other ranks of the Assam Rifles were injured. In the following months, women targeted the rice-mills owned by the Mayangs, which, "with a daily turn over of 11,200 mounds of rice, absorb the entire paddy available in the state (and)... threw out of employment the bulk of the people who lived by husking". Women boycotted the main bazaar, i.e., the hub of hoarding and profiteering that was under colonial protection, and protest meetings were held in the Police Bazar. They formed vanguards,

intercepted rice carters carrying paddy for sale to the Mayang and at times threw cartloads of rice into the gutter. In January 1940 alone they held up about 150 rice-loaded carts.

In the course of the struggle, lasting several months, women besieged state thana and fought several pitched battles with the security personnel. In one of the pitched battles fought on 14 January, forty women agitators and some men were injured. Women organized against tax gathering, and the leaders advised the agitators to arm themselves with tem (a long wooden appliance used for weaving cloth) and wear two phaneks (sarong type of cloth worn by the women of Manipur) while confronting tax-collectors. In short, there was a qualitative shift of the movement towards popular struggle for a responsible government. The movement, however, subsided as a result of the approach of the Second World War in Manipur in the early 1940s.

The target

The primary targets of Nupi Lan were the agents of exploitation and the visual manifestations that have

symbolized the colonial sovereignty, e.g., the Mayangs and the Mayang owned mills. In fact, the Mayangs infiltrated into Manipur under colonial protection and by 1939 they enjoyed absolute monopoly rights in: cotton, tea-seed, bees-wax and agar, elephant tusk, deer horn and orchid trades; silk manufacturing, mulberry plantation or silk farming, timber felling and vehicular traffic; plantation in rubber, jade and chalmugra seed, orchid mahals (reserved area) and so on. On the eve of the Nupi Lan they were carrying out unrestrained trading to the great disadvantage of the local consumers.

Economic oppression under Indian traders had been resented as early as the Bazar Boycott (1920). An application that was addressed to the Manipur State Durbar, dated 28 September 1920 reads, "...that your humble petitioners are extremely aggrieved at the hard lot of the cart owners who owe money to the Marwari (businessmen). They are compelled to carry the goods of (Mayang businessmen) at a lower rate of annas /8/ or /12/ or even Rs 1 per maund than the ordinary market rate of hire, as they are not allowed to look to any means for their gains. Over and above this, they owe to (Mayang businessmen) according to the system of compound interest and to carry a few maunds in excess in every cart gratis. Moreover, there are the occasional insertions of fake and real accounts against their name (in the registration book) for taking some necessities of the cart. They even take interest on the value of the articles after turning them into capital. Thus after the end of the year when all accounts are settled and the inter-

ests are charged into capital, in spite of their hard labour throughout the year to clear the debt by occasional payment of the little savings of the wages they find to their great astonishment that about the same or even greater capital than that of the last year. Then they are compelled to write another bond (in the registration book) for the coming year. This gradually increases year by year till it is beyond their power of clearing it..."

While the administration and the economy were in the grip of the Mayang agents and traders, Manipur was garrisoned from time to time by hordes of Mayang armies such as the Assam Rifles, Gurkha Rifles, Bombay Pioneers, and Burma Military Police. Under the prevailing circumstances, the Mayangs were being looked upon with

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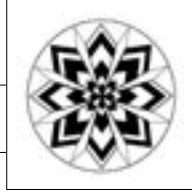
contempt as the agents of colonialism, the cause of administrative manipulation, cultural exploitation, economic drainage and underdevelopment. They, obviously, became the prime targets of attack during the Nupi Lan.

Conclusion

Nupi Lan was a crucial part of a series of organized anti-colonial struggles such as the First Women War (1904), Anti-Pothang Movement and Anti-Water Tax Agitation (1910s), the Thadou- Kuki Resistance (1917), Bazar Boycott (1920), and the Zeliarong Movement under the leadership of Jadonang (1920s). However, it took the movement to a qualitatively new level, as it not only targeted the colonial free trade on rice and the Mayang control of the economy but also paved the way to the movement for establishing a responsible government in Manipur.

The valiant role that women played in it has left a historical legacy while inspiring thousands of women to play an active role in the ongoing Meira Paibi movement. On 15 July 2004 a dozen Manipuri mothers stripped in front of the Assam Rifles headquarters at Kangla demanding an end to state terrorism in Manipur. In other words, the Nupi Lan of 1939 is an event of the past, yet the objective conditions under which women waged the struggle remain more or less unchanged till today. If neo-colonialism has to be continuously superimposed upon Manipur, history will be an eyewitness to a series of Nupi Lans in the years to come. ■

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University*



Reflections

Perils of writing history

History might have been a closed event but historical writing is an open process, subject to revisions and rejections in the light of constantly changing source material, says K Raghavendra Rao

My reflections on history and historiography were provoked by two recent publications in Kannada and the bitter controversies surrounding them. One is an attempt at revisionist history, challenging the received wisdom about the birth and original caste of Basaveswara, the great social, religious and cultural reformer of medieval Karnataka and the founder of the sect of Lingayats. The other is outwardly a work of fiction but actually an attempt to narrate the atrocities committed by Muslim invaders, especially focusing on their systematic destruction of temples during the period of the Vijayanagara empire in Karnataka. The first work is "Anu Deva, Horaganava", by a Dalit scholar, Banjagere Jayaprakash, and the second, the novel entitled "Awarana", by the popular and prolific Kannada novelist, S.L.Byrappa. Jayaprakash questions the prevalent idea that Basaveswara was originally a Brahmin, and tries to suggest, largely with oral-cultural evidence, that he could have been born a Dalit. I do not think that he makes out a strong case for his revision of history, but he does raise some questions about the dominant version. The controversy seems to be centred, not so much on his thesis per se, but on the alleged insult involved to Basaveswara, which has

prompted orthodox Lingayats to demand that the work be banned by the government. Byrappa's novel has provoked the ire of self-styled secularist intellectuals who are worried about anti-Muslim implications of the work more than either its validity as history or its quality as a novel.

What are the issues raised by these controversies? Basically they seemed to be not concerned with history or fiction but with contemporary politics. In other words, the controversies have clearly political reverberations. This is because the sane and sober reaction should have been to dismiss Jayaprakash's work as a lively and interesting work but not convincing as hard history, and

It must be emphasised that, no matter how or why one draws the boundary between the macro and the micro view of history, they are mutually implicated in each other, and that their relationship is governed by a dialectical process

dismiss Byrappa's work as a poor novel and potted history. But this has not happened. Jayaprakash's work does raise theoretical issues and methodological issues about historiography. At least he makes two valid points. The first is that the nature of historical writing is politically constrained by who writes the history and methodologically constrained by adequate data. As for the first point, he suspects some Brahminisation of Basaveswara's revolutionary movement, and as for the second point, he suggests that, in the Indian conditions, historiography must resort to some extent to oral historical data. Byrappa operates with a naive liberal notion of historical objectivity. His argument that he is concerned with objective history misses the point that historiography is also a subjectively mediated process involving the historian's or the source's subjectivity. Byrappa's position that truth is a phenomenon independent of its subjective and political context leads him to divest history of its moral and political responsibility.

Underlying both the controversies, there is the virtually intractable question of the relationship between macro-history with its inclination towards grand narratives and micro-history with its commitment to local narrative. I recall a seminar

in which a distinguished subaltern historian referred to something that happened in a small street in a small town during the colonial period, without referring to imperialism or colonialism. I suspect the framework of Cambridge historiography on India, by concentrating too much on the internal Indian situation, seems to absolve imperialism of its historical crimes. After all, both macro and micro are ultimately matters of drawing the boundary. Where one draws the boundary between the two is a necessarily ideological and political decision. The best historical work, which maintains a delicate balance between the grand and little narratives, that I know of, is Shahid Amin's classic work on Chauri Chaura. In these matters there can never be univer-

sally acceptable answers and positions, perhaps even questions. The best thing one can do is to keep an honest and open mind, and avoid dogmatic assertiveness. History might have been a closed event but historical writing is an open process, subject to revisions and rejections in the light of constantly changing source material.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that, no matter how or why one draws the boundary between the macro and the micro, they are mutually implicated in each other, and that their relationship is governed by a dialectical process. Finally, I was intrigued by learning from Penrose's, "The Emperor's New Mind", that physics is also faced with the intractable problem of connecting the

macro and the micro. I quote from the preface to the revised edition 1999- "... Hence, we must look for a relevant place where there is an important gap in our theories. This gap, I claim, lies in the bridge between the 'submicroscopic' world where quantum physics holds sway and macro- world of our more direct experiences, where classical physics works so well...." (p xxxi) I leave it to the readers to puzzle out the relevance of the problematic of physics to social epistemology! ■

K Raghavendra Rao a well known political scientist and academician, author of several works including "Imagining unimaginable communities" is also an accomplished translator of modern Kannada poetry into English.



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Perspectives

British rule and problems of the present education system

What was the system of education in pre-British India, and what was the impact of British rule on it, discusses Naresh Kumar

In a society divided into rich and poor, exploiters and exploited, between various castes, religions, sexes, languages, cities and villages and so on, the education system cannot be neutral. It is obvious that those in power will cast the education system in accordance with their interests, so that the consciousness and activity of those without power can be checked. This fully applies to the education system prevailing in the country today. At the same time, this system was not built in a day. Its development has a history. To understand its contradictions, it is essential to know how it developed.

Lord Macaulay, who laid the foundation of the English education system here, said, "In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. Those Indians of the high class who are in government also speak it... We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellect."

Sir Trevelyan, an important man in the English education system, said, "There is only one way to turn the thoughts of the Indian nation in another direction. And that is to create Western thoughts among

them." Those youth "who study in our schools and colleges start hating the jungle dictatorship under which their ancestors used to suffer and then they start hoping that their national institutes would be created in the British style."

This is what he said in the British parliament in 1857 – "After such an education, a political revolution in this country will be unlikely and we will easily be able to rule over our Empire for long.

"If the British want to rule India forever, they will then have to pay a great deal of attention to education. If the British want the youth to forget the thoughts of independence and patriotism, then education will be like a fire fighter in this regard – Indians will then not rise up against us.

"I have lived in Bengal for a number of years. There I saw that educated Indians have totally different types of thoughts. Instead of thinking of slitting our throats, these people want to sit along with the British in courts as juries or hope to become bench magistrates."

In Trevelyan's opinion, "By increasing education and by giving jobs to more and more Indians, the British rule can be made permanent." Education was made the means of getting government jobs and the

highest ambition of the youth was restricted to getting such jobs. This process has fully continued after independence and the fight to get one's share in it has emerged as a strong political current.

Everyone knows how the Indians in government jobs during the British Raj behaved towards those fighting for freedom. How lakhs of Indians working in the police, bureaucracy and legal system used to hate the Indian people and oppress them.

The new education system became a strong means to create the cultural system of imperialism in India as well as in the other colonies. In this education system, knowledge was also colonial. It was planned as per the requirements of the colonial rulers. The colonial knowledge not only helped to maintain the hierarchical social system in Indian society based on race and caste, but also greatly contributed towards strengthening British rule. This education produced a feeling of inferiority about our culture and languages in the minds of ordinary Indians. Even today we are not free from these shackles. To this day the common educated Indians have a colonial mentality.

To impose their education system the British had to first destroy the education system prevailing in

India since ancient times. This was done at many levels and in many ways. It is obvious that the native education system was neither ideal nor was it non-partisan, but its roots were Indian and it was continuously being developed. It was not a static system, as is commonly said.

The education system prevailing in India before the advent of the British can broadly be looked at as follows:

- 1) Religious and moral education regarding life values.
- 2) Education relating to skills, crafts and agriculture.
- 3) Education relating to philosophy, science, technology and mathematics.
- 4) Education relating to arts.
- 5) Education relating to politics and military art.
- 6) Medical education.

There was both formal as well as non-formal education. The broad producing classes and women (from among non-savarnas) were confined to the first and second levels, but there were exceptions in this as well. Knowledge was primarily the monopoly of the Brahmins. The level of knowledge was higher, and definitely not lower than that prevalent in Europe. Definitely this education encompassed all aspects of life. It could have been strengthened and developed into a modern education system. An important aspect of the Bhakti movement was to prepare the ground for a new education. The Bhakti movement was a very strong and broad movement against feudal privileges, caste inequalities, superstitions and the separation of labour and knowledge as well as for the establishment of democratic values in society. The majority of producing people in the country were ex-

Government grants to all education activities were stopped. During this period the colonial education system was slowly created and institutionalised

pressing their aspirations through the Bhakti movement. People were questioning every established truth, value and accepted norm. Due to this the theological basis for the influence and domination of feudal rule was getting steadily eroded. The actual manifestations of this were seen in politics and state power.

Basing itself on people's consciousness, people's languages and people's lives, the Bhakti movement challenged feudal privileges and shook their roots. It took India to such a stage that no power could advance by negating people's rights. The Sufi movement of that time played a similar role. The saints and fakirs of the Bhakti and Sufi movements were teachers of the people in the true sense.

Between 1757 and 1857 the Company Raj made efforts to dig up and destroy these roots so that the roots of the British rule could be strengthened. Government grants to all education activities were stopped. During this period the colonial education system was slowly created and institutionalized. The Charter Act of 1813, the education policy of Lord Macaulay, the Woods dispatch, The Hunter Commission, University Act, the Sergeant Plan, all of them show how the colonial education system was getting strengthened.

Even in the education system that the British established, the written English, through a very special system of notations, reflected the historical consciousness of the dual struggle waged by the working people in the field of nature and social production. With time language becomes the repository of the memories of collective struggles, which reflect both continuity and change. Apart from being a medium of communication language is also a carrier of culture and civilization. Language has a primary and very important role in determining the kind of relationship one has with one's natural and social environment. As a medium of instruction in education, English broke off the process of communication with the people.

By expelling the knowledge of labour and life from the ambit of education, the English education gave birth to contempt and negligence towards the laboring masses. By making the knowledge of English the pre-requisite to the task of administration, the education system was converted into a machine to produce "educated slaves" of the British. In addition to this, English education performed the task of producing a new historical outlook. According to this outlook the natives have no history, no culture. The culture had to be imported from Europe. Divided into castes, religion, tribes in conflict with each other, this society was basically considered as being in uncivilized stage. It was through the arrival of Europeans that enlightenment, culture and justice had been brought to this society. In the society that was gradually moving towards unity, division and discord was deliberately encouraged and institutionalized, becoming a cancer to our society.

The period 1757-1857 was marked by destruction of the social, economic, political and educational fabric of the Indian society. The impact of this destruction was felt by all sections of society, particularly the labouring masses, of which the dalits were in the majority. That is the reason why they wholeheartedly participated in the 1857 uprising. Of the lakhs of people who were massacred in Awadh region, the majority were poor people, particularly the dalits and their teachers – the Ulemas, Sanatani, Kabirpanthis, nath panthis, and various preachers belonging to various religious-educational currents.

The education system that was established after this destruction has nothing to do with the workers, peasants, language, culture, traditions, history, literature, science, medical science, religion, or philosophy of the soil of this land. This is entirely a system imposed from outside. The present education system has its origin in this system. All the various commissions that were set up in the post independence period for education reforms did not come up with any change that would make a break with the old structure of education and reestablish its link with the land and its people. All that was done was to include what was necessary in the new system. To sum up none of the commissions on education made an attempt to decolonize the education system.

The new form of education system that is emerging with the process of globalization is no less dangerous to Indian society than the system that was imposed on the Indian people in the period following the uprising of 1857. Education has been totally cut off from the lives of people, labour and collective need of the society, and converted into a commodity. De-

pending upon one's purchasing power one can buy a commodity called "education" from the market. After buying such education, the purchasers do their best to use this education to enrich themselves. Making use of the prevailing conditions is the morality of present times. Competition and profits are the two most sacred values. To care for those who are left out of this competition is foolishness and a crime. Lies, cunning, individualism, greed, contempt for society, labour and women, cowardice, cruelty, indiscipline, and showing-off—all these values are a product of the present education system. The youth educated in such a system develop a servile mentality. Either he becomes a low paid or very highly paid slave, but a slave all the same; there is no alternative. His cultural level is brought down to such a low level that he considers the most corrupt and worthless person as his ideal. Heroes of the world of advertisement and glitter are turned into real life idols. He looks at his own tradition and land with contempt.

There are remarkable similarities between this education system and the education imposed by the British in the aftermath of 1857. This also reflects the needs and nature of the present ruling classes. Whatever little positive elements of decolonization and democracy were there in the education system have been completely decimated by the new education policy of 1986 and later the Birla-Ambani report. The ruling classes had already sensed that the policy of globalization and economic reforms they were imposing on the people would not be taken lying down by the people and they would resist. That is the reason they introduced the new education policy so that people become loyal, servile and selfish. So that the problem of another uprising does

not arise. We can see its effect today.

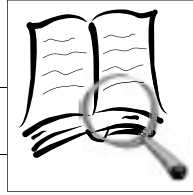
But it is true that the consciousness to resist oppression can be numbed for some time but cannot be totally eliminated, because this consciousness emanates from the objective conditions of life. Though belatedly, people will definitely become active to resist devastation and destruction and find solutions to their problems. To ensure that this resistance becomes organized we must not only expose all aspects of the present education system among the people, but also must present outline of the education system that we propose to build, so that people wage their struggle with clear aims.

The process of understanding of each and every aspect of the education system is closely linked with the task of transforming the present system. One of the main tasks of the student and youth movement is to transform the existing education and assert values which are in favour of people, both within and outside the organisation. The question of democratisation of education is closely linked the question of democratization of society, which in turn is directly linked to the overthrow of capitalism.

To conclude, what Gandhi said about English education is very relevant:

"We must realize that by adopting English education we have made our nation a slave. English education has resulted in arrogance, anger, oppression and so on. English educated people have not spared in fooling and tormenting common masses. And if we do something for their benefit we are but repaying a small portion of the debt that we owe to them". ■

Naresh Kumar is a Research Scholar in Lucknow University. This article has been translated from Hindi by Pravin



Book Review

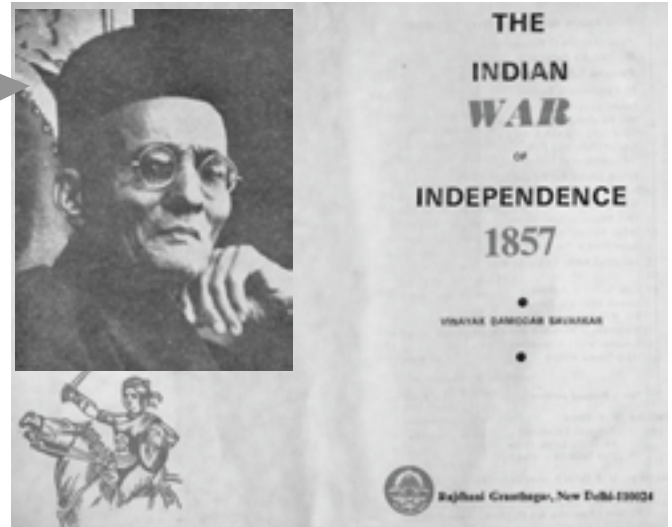
The legendary history of 1857

Shivanand Kanavi reviews Vinayak Savarkar's "The Indian War of Independence-1857"

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's book, "The Indian War of Independence 1857" is a truly legendary book. The book itself has achieved a legendary status in the last hundred years since its first publication. The book showed up the censors in England for what they were, when they took the unprecedented step of banning it before it was even published. Thus it was a remarkable enterprise, in which many patriots participated, to enable the book to see the light of day. Lala Hardayal, professor at the University of California at Berkeley and founder of the famous Hindustani Ghadar Party, reprinted it in 1912 to make it available to a larger audience, and Bhagat Singh and his associates also found it worthwhile to publish it again in India later. It is a pity that no publisher has thought it fit to reprint it in this 150th anniversary year of the Great Ghadar, when old books are being reprinted and new ones being churned out. It is however heartening that most booksellers are reporting a lot of interest in books on 1857 among the reading public.

It is intriguing that a nation that groaned under the colonial yoke for 200 years and whose pre-colonial past is glorified by some and decried by others but researched and documented in only a fragmentary fashion. We continue to be indifferent to re-discovering ourselves even after gaining political independence. Our

**V D Savarkar
(Photo) and an
image from his
book (Cover
image)**



schoolteachers rarely take students to museums or monuments and do not teach history in a living fashion; our history departments in 200+ Universities remain under-funded and totter on the verge of being declared "non-merit" by administrators influenced by market economics. On the other hand we continue to boast of a 5000 year old civilisation, but when confronted by foreigners or our own conscience, we find few books that tell our past in a way that can ignite popular imagination and at the same time give leads to future research by showing where the gaps are.

Now that I have vented my frustration as an outsider to the discipline of history, let me address myself to Savarkar's book. It is one of the best written so far on the subject

of the great uprising of 1857. It is truly panoramic and sweeps thousands of kilometers of territory, from Kunwar Singh's Jagdishpur in Bihar to Peer Ali's Patna, to Nana Saheb, Azimullah Khan and Tatia Tope's Bithoor and Kanpur, to Laxmibai's Jhansi, to Begum Hazrat Mahal and Moulvi Ahmed Shah's Awadh and Lucknow, to Bakht Khan's Bareilly, to Bahadur Shah Zafar and Feroze Shah's Dilli. The innumerable heroes mentioned by Savarkar, who rose up and led the local uprisings in town after town and kingdom after kingdom all across the Gangetic plain, central India and even south of the Vindhyas, are too long to be listed here. The 'others'--those who fought with great "heroism" and "loyalty" on the side of the British and were mainly responsible for

Book Review

the victory of the British in almost all the battles--are also mentioned with great feeling of revulsion by the author. Those who waited to see which side might win and remained neutral, and ultimately threw their weight behind the British, are also listed at length.

A panoramic view of history is difficult to narrate. In Mahabharata, Vyas used the artifice of "embedded journalist"--Sanjaya and his tele-vision--to tell the story of the great battle of Kurukshetra. Here Savarkar uses no such artifice, and with remarkable dexterity handles distances, places, times and events that take place over a battlefield of continental proportions, compared to Europe, and spanning several years. If his exclamations over bravery and the heroism of patriots and fury over treachery by Indians, sound repetitive and sentimental, one just glides past them because of the wealth of information that he provides about a period about which we have been taught or told so little.

The story itself is very inspiring because it has not been told in this intensely nationalistic fashion in the last 150 years. On the other hand there is increasing evidence that the British consciously suppressed all objective historiography, even

more nationalistic historiography, and engaged in calculated character assassination of all the main leaders of the uprising, be it Bahadur Shah Zafar, or Nana Saheb, or Tatia Tope or Begum Hazrat Mahal.

The book extensively quotes fragments of truth that slipped through British eyewitness accounts of the uprising. Kaye, Ball, Malleson and others are frequently quoted to buttress the author's argument. However Savarkar hardly gives any kind of references to what he asserts about the extensive nature of preparation of the uprising, the methods of their organization, their statecraft and their vision. He mentions Swaraj and Swadharma as the guiding vision of the uprising, but is deliciously vague about what they meant to the rebels.

Thus a historian might call this legendary in another sense of the word--full of legends rather than facts. From circumstantial evidence and logic we could infer that he may be right about many things that he asserts but an academic historian would probably baulk at it. Obviously he worked under very difficult circumstances while researching for the book in London. However there is no excuse for professional historians not following up his leads.

Another aspect of the book is that it was agit-prop at its best. In fact the book was extensively distributed by the Ghadar Party amidst different units of the Indian army in their attempt to organize another widespread mutiny in the army in 1915 to coincide with a civilian uprising, a repeat of 1857 so to say. In fact the Ghadar Party expressly chose the word Ghadar in its title not only to adduce revolutionary attributes to the organization but also to convey that "the Great Ghadar of 1857 could not achieve its aims and hence the task of the revolutionaries now would be to complete it". When British agents penetrated this attempt, and the leaders were arrested in hundreds in different cantonments, many copies of Savarkar's book were found with the soldiers involved.

All in all, even 100 years after being written, this incandescent piece of writing brings the events of 1857 to life and makes it worth reading to all interested in the history of colonialism and India's fight against it. ■

Shivanand Kanavi is a senior journalist and author of "Sand to Silicon: The amazing story of digital technology"

Continued from page 21

so many people from different parts of India and different fields of specialisation had offered to join in this endeavor and become editorial advisors. The decision to bring out the magazine as a quarterly was reaffirmed. There was animated discussion on how the network of writers and dis-

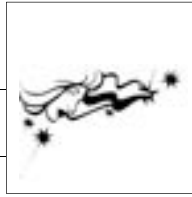
seminators could be continuously expanded. The meeting also discussed proposals for financing the production and distribution of the magazine.

The meeting discussed proposals for popularising the work of the abhiyan including the newsletter and magazine. It affirmed the

future programs in different parts of India.

The next meeting of the organising committee has been slated for December 1-2, 2007 in Lucknow. ■

Compiled by Santosh



Short Story

Freedom

S Raghavan

6 January 1858

The chill wind tore at their blood splattered ankles, as they trudged along the plain wilderness away from Fategarh and towards Etawah. Miles and miles of barren land gently sloped towards the river valleys in front of them. Not far away, the terai low lands cut away from the bangar uplands, the two divisions separated by a vast rocky stretch – the handiwork of centuries of erosive action of rivers.

“It was just like yesterday”, thought Ramkumar as he looked at the Doab from the makeshift post. Eight months back, on a bright summer afternoon, his life changed forever. Hundreds of soldiers posted in the 10th Indian Infantry revolted against their British masters in a massive display of solidarity and resolve to liberate their motherland from the yoke of slavery.

From that minute onwards, events and happenings hurtled past him – the feverish planning meetings with his co-sepoys Jamal and others, the tearful farewell to his young wife Jamuna and their 8-year old son Ashok, the storming of Luknow by the insurgents, the siege of Delhi and then the fall of Delhi and Lucknow to the British within a few months thereafter.

They were now fugitives in their own country, pursued by General Walpole and his forces, encircled and driven towards Fategarh for

annihilation. Ramkumar’s insurgent band was small, but they effectively checkmated the British at Etawah.

Jamal eyed the small quantity of muskets they were left with to defend themselves from the marauding army. But their inadequate munitions didn’t bother him. “This is our land, our trees and forests, our people. Why should we surrender to these brutes? Let us set an example and teach these barbarians a lesson or two in bravery”, he cried with passion.

Ramkumar’s eyes shone with even more conviction. “Let us fight till the finish. For every life they take, let us take four. These aliens don’t have a right to be here”.

Animated cries rent the air. The insurgent band feverishly took up their positions.

The leader of the enemy forces reconnoitred the place. “These uncivilized brutes don’t want us to bring them civilization,” he grimaced. “They don’t deserve to live”.

He then ordered his forces to go on the offensive and not stop until all the rebels were annihilated. The enemy forces first threw in hand grenades to blow up the insurgents in their precarious hideout. There was little success. The butchers then tried to smoke the occupants out with burning straw, the way a hunter would do to smoke out rabbits out of their burrows. Their efforts were still in vain. Through openings, the rebels kept constantly

firing at the troops, keeping them at bay for hours on end.

At last, the assassins decided to blow up the entire place. Officers of the Engineers fabricated a mine with a number of gun cartridges and ignited it with a lead wire.

In that split second before the explosion tore the head off Ramkumar’s body, he remembered his wife and son, their longing tear-filled faces. “One day we will all be free”, thought Ramkumar in his dying moments.

10 August 2004

Far down the slope, the big rivers Eeril and Thobal flowed steadily down, their waters rippling in the bright morning sun. The hills around the cup shaped valley shone resplendently, with thick foliage.

The quiet gurgling of the waters in the brooks, the gentle twittering of birds, and the sway of the breeze could not calm the seething within Chongloi. The news made his blood boil. On the morning of 11th July 2004, the body of Thangjam Manorama, with barely a few clothes on, was discovered near Ngariyan Mapao Maring village. She had been brutally raped, tortured and then killed in the most gory manner by the 17 Assam Rifles.

“How can we tolerate this situation even a second more?” fumed Chongloi to his friend Tejkumar, his close associate in the Youth Front.

Short Story

They were making plans for the massive rally the next day at Kongba. Encounter killings, kidnappings, people being whisked away from their homes – these were everyday affairs in Manipur. The past month, Chongloi and his friends had been protesting against these brutal acts through sit-ins, rallies, and pitched battles with the army. Women protested on a massive scale everywhere, undeterred by rubber bullets and tear gas, and this gave a great impetus to the struggle. The *Meira Paibies* kept vigil for whole nights against the Indian army.

What infuriated Chongloi and Tejkumar was the barbaric, undemocratic and genocidal nature of killings carried out by the state in the name of restoring 'law and order'. The alleged custodial rape and brutal murder of Thangjam Manorama,

the killing of Jamkholet, a pastor, the cold-blooded murders during the *Holi* festival, were glaring examples. In fact, the whole of Manipur had been kept virtually under military rule for the past 24 years since 1980 when all of Manipur wilted under the draconian AFSPA.

Hundreds of bayonets greeted the demonstrators the next day. Chongloi had never witnessed such a large turnout in his life with women taking the lead. Slogans denouncing the genocidal killing of the Manipuri people and the draconian AFSPA rent the air. The entire District Commissioner's office was cordoned off. As the women attempted to seize the office, they were met with a rain of rubber bullets, tear gas shells and lathi charge. Women by the dozens were being carried away in stretchers to the nearby hospital. Pitched

confrontations continued between the protestors and the police. The unarmed infuriated protestors attacked the police with stones and catapults.

The Commander of the 32 Rashtriya Rifles reconnoitred the place from a vantage point on the terrace of the District Commissioner's Office. Wave upon wave of people were advancing, undeterred by the assault of the armed forces. "These upstarts need to be taught a lesson. They don't appreciate that we are bringing them democracy. These terrorists don't deserve to live", he muttered to himself.

The Commander belted out an order to his forces to open fire. In the split second that a bullet bore through his back, Chongloi remembered his parents, his two school-going brothers and a sister. "One day we will all be free", he gasped. ■

Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh

Revolutionary Celebrations

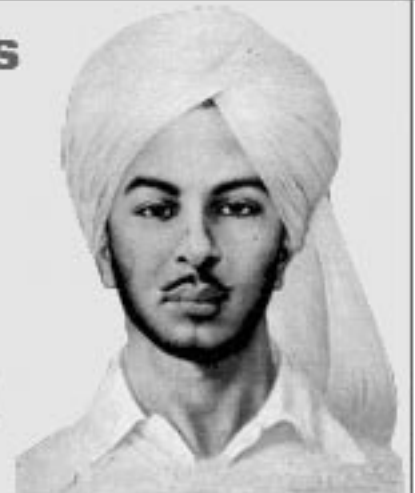
on the occasion of the
Birth Centenary
of Shaheed Bhagat Singh

organised by
Hind Naujvan Ekta Sabha

October 7, 2007 2 p.m.

Chinmaya Mission Auditorium Lodhi Road, New Delhi

contact at: E 392, first floor, Sanjay Colony, Okhla Ph II, New Delhi 110020, ph: 09968259246



Letters to the Editor

Continued from Page 7

Challenge before us is to popularize *Ghadar Jari Hai* magazine and other similar media initiatives so that Indian history and thought material can be rescued from the euro-centric rendition.

**Yours,
Prof. Bharat Seth
IIT Bombay**

Dear Editor,

After attaining independence in 1947, the citizens of this great nation consciously or unconsciously accepted Democratic Republic as a system of governance. Theoretically, Democratic Republic through 'RIGHT TO VOTE' provides equal opportunity-liberty-right to contest election and to cast his/her vote in favour of the candidate nominated by himself/herself only to every voter of the constituency/electoral college in particular and of the country in general.

In order to get rid of the slavery of the political parties, there is an urgent need to give birth to Revolutionary Democratic Movement in India in particular and in the world in general. For this purpose one has to mobilize each one of one hundred and ten crores Indians mentally and physically. Publication of 'Ghadar Jari Hai' may certainly prove effective in mobilizing one hundred and ten crores Indians and in giving birth to Revolutionary Democratic Movement in India. It would be more effective if every issue of the magazine, 'Ghadar Jari Hai', is released through Press Conference highlighting the objectives and programmes of the Abhayan.

**With best wishes and heartiest regard.
Yours sincerely,
Jag Pal Singh
Meerut**

Dear Editor,

I would like to congratulate you for this great initiative. Going through the inaugural issue of this journal, reinforced the conviction in me that what is being attempted through this journal is arguably the most important need of the times for us Indians — the development of modern Indian thought. As you have so cogently argued in the editorial, this is needed to address the problem of ending the arbitrariness of power and the colonial style plunder in new and old forms. In your Editorial you argue succinctly for the necessity for direct democracy and a people centric economy in its place.

Indians are second to none in nothing. When we enquire more deeply into our past, we will see that Indians have contributed in all fields of knowledge. Yet the colonialists never stopped for a moment from spreading the

notion that Indians are backward, uncultured, in need of the civilisational “assistance” of the white man, in the form of their rule, their education system, their theories etc. What is really tragic is that a section of Indians, took up this propaganda, and adopted it as their own. It is also tragic that we are ruled today by precisely this section of Indians.

It is not without significance that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, while receiving his honorary doctoral degree at the Oxford University, thanked the British for the “gifts” of the judiciary, and the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), two of the instruments of the “rule of law” and “good governance”. These institutions were established precisely to carry out the plunder of India and legalise this plunder. There is great need to explain to the younger generation, the origin and evolution of these institutions as well.

It is extremely important to have pride in the revolutionary and progressive heritage of our motherland. A thick fog has covered up this heritage, the fog of Eurocentrism. I am so confident that this magazine will contribute to clearing this fog.

In the Indian community in Canada, to which I belong, the word Ghadar immediately strikes a deep emotional chord. A century ago, around the time of the 50th anniversary of the 1857 Ghadar, Indian revolutionaries abroad formed the Hindustani Ghadar Party to organize for revolutionary overthrow of colonial rule. Their heroic words and deeds will always inspire successive generations of Indians. Later on, in the 1970's, my younger brother, the late Hardial Bains, led in the work of organising the Indian revolutionaries abroad in the Hindustani Ghadar Party (Organisation of Indian Marxist Leninists Abroad) to uphold the legacy of the Ghadar of 1857 and carry it to completion in contemporary conditions. That struggle still continues.

The enemies of the Indian people ardently hope that the Indian people will give up their Ghadar, give up their “jameer” (conscience) and accept the present system as the last word. That the Ghadar continues is evident from the ongoing struggle of the Indian people. I am sure that the best of Indian minds will contribute in the field of thought material, through the pages of this path breaking journal, to show the way forward for the workers and peasants, women and youth, and all the oppressed peoples and nations constituting our Hindostan.

**With revolutionary greetings
Gurmit Kaur
Toronto**

The Mutiny

(Kajri)

*Our countrymen are in revolt, O Sanwaria.
Dark clouds have gathered, O Sanwaria.
In fifty seven they rose against their thralldom.
Men and women, everyone stirred for freedom.
Soaked with blood are their garments, O Sanwaria.
Deserted are their chambers, O Sanwaria.
Our countrymen are in revolt, O Sanwaria.
The first spark was kindled by the Bengal battalion,
Like wild fire it rolled from region to region.
The vault of tyranny broke down, O Sanwaria.
The skulls of Firangis rolled on, O Sanwaria.
In old Bahadur Shah, once more youth was resurgent.
Old Kunwar Singh, Nana and Tantiya valiant.
Leaders of bloodiest battles, O Sanwaria.
Tearing their enemies to smithereens, O Sanwaria.
Lacs of heads rolled on yet their hearts knew no mercy.
O who could describe it what naked brutality.
Where lies deliverance from this plight, O Sanwaria.
O Lord, when shall you appear to undo this wrong,
O Sanwaria.*



Ghadar Jari Hai

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India's Tryst with Destiny!



When?